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New York December 16, 2004

Mr. Menachem Rosensaft
Holocaust Survivors Memoir Project
World Jewish Congress
501 Madison Avenue
New York NY 10022

Mr. Rosensaft,

Mr. Andy Hollinger suggested sending to your attention the English version of my wife Lea Ottolenghi Orefice memoir written between 1943 and 1945, as a young Italian Jewish girl (20 years old), living in Switzerland as a refugee.

My wife diary is quite interesting because reports, day by day, the life of Jewish Italian refugees in Switzerland and the way they were received and treated.

The Municipality of our city has published the Italian version of the diary in Italy, Livorno (Leghorn) and we would like to have it published as well in the USA.

My wife and myself are witness of the Spielberg Holocaust project and I am the Italian witness of the Winer oral history of the Holocaust.

Thank you for your consideration

P.S. We are leaving for Italy Dec.18th and will be back in New York March 7th 2005. You may contact us:

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ATTENTION !

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Translated by Matilde Mancini

New York, March 1989

To my grandchildren: Nora, Lorenzo, Sara, Daniel, Raffaele and Laura

"Lea Ottolenghi, remembrances and impressions of a refugee"

Switzerland 1943-45

PREFACE

Tied with a string, I have in front of me six notebooks with my name and this title. The ink is fading, the pages are yellowing with age... Before the words disappear altogether, I want to rewrite them and try to recapture those feelings that I impulsively wrote down on paper at the age of twenty. I was afraid then, and rightly so, that the facts, places and persons would one day be only a confused memory (except of course for the most salient events). Since my daughters (lately Laura) and my granddaughter Nora have several times asked to read those pages, I'll endeavor to transcribe them now at the age of 68, and dedicate to them all these memories.

I'm elated and at the same time fearful, to relive that particular period of my life; I came out of it unscathed, luckily, and strengthened in character and spirit. But it is certainly very painful to relive those sad times.

ADOLESCENCE

My earliest memories go back to when I was a mere child, seventh of eight brothers and sisters. Being so many there was always a big to do at home, and I, one among so many, felt very insignificant and unimportant. In my eyes my brothers were so big and my oldest sister, Emma, was a substitute mother. It was she who was in charge of me and my baby sister, Anna, helping us with our homework and our shopping. Mother always read so much, both newspapers and books living in an ideal world of her own. From early childhood I had heard from hereabout the unification of Italy, she spoke proudly of Mazzini and Garibaldi and she would sing and teach us patriotic songs. I was in awe of my father, he seemed to me so much older than he actually was, with his white beard and whiskers. I was intimidated and also afraid of him because he was a rather nervous man and would often shout at mamma who never said a word or reacted in any way. I was always blaming him for being so unfair to mamma. Most of the times the arguments derived from the fact that papa was very religious and observant of the Jewish religion and mamma was not and he would have wanted to bend her in his ways. But he respected her and every evening when he came home from the office he would tell her everything that had happened and asked for her

advice. I remember the large group at the dinner table, us children could not speak and most of the time the adults' conversation was incomprehensible to me; we had two live-in maids who were devoted to us and we were very fond of them.

In 1937 we moved, we had been living by the sea in a big beautiful apartment, but it was on two floors and no elevator, and that was bad for papa who had a heart condition. So we moved to the city near papa's office: INA (Isituto Nazionale Assicurazione) which papa founded in Livorno in Via Cairoli in 1913. Our apartment was in a brand new building with an elevator and central heating; but mamma missed the beautiful view of the water and so did I. I remember spending hours by the window looking at the boundless sea and watch the passing ships disappearing in the horizon and dreaming of traveling to far away places (these dreams were fulfilled). But I was happy to live in the city, here it was easier to visit my classmates.

CHAPTER 1: GASTONE

In 1937 we used to go to the "Pancaldi" beach, I was then 16, and on August 3 my friend Lilia Cabibbe introduced me to Gastone Orefice. We became friends and formed a group consisting of his cousins Lattes and Belforte, and other friends. We often went on bicycle excursions and held our first dances at home with the family. In September Silvia married Prof. Elio Rossi. That winter, Gastone and I would meet in the morning half way between our two schools, for I went to the Classical High School and Gastone to the Scientific one. During the summer Gastone was often away, he would mysteriously go to Switzerland for his cousins Nahon to bring money. In 1938 the notorious racial laws were decreed and the event that struck me most directly was the prohibition for Jews to attend school. It was very serious , for it was such an integral part of my life. I was fond of my classmates and my teachers, especially Prof. Mainardi, an anti-fascist. a man of great worth who made me love and appreciate the study of natural sciences in which I thought I would specialize later on at the university. When I attended the first classes at the Liceo, I did not feel within myself any particular attraction to any subjects. I always passed but felt rather insignificant both as a young woman and as a student. In Senior High School, instead, I began to like studying and I felt appreciated and esteemed by my professors and classmates. It was thus that I was not able to attend my Liceo for the third and last scholastic year, 1938-1939.

It was a tragedy at home especially for my three older brothers who lost their jobs, two of them were married with children, and for Emma who was a teacher.Lina, who is 4 years older than I am, was able to finish the university in Pisa inasmuch that she was already enrolled. Mario, the oldest, decided to go to America with his family, his wife Lisa and his four little girls, the youngest was barely one year old. Anna, my youngest sister, who was in junior high school and I studied in the auditorium of the little school in Via Micali where Emma taught literature and Lina taught sciences for a small salary. Besides studying, we met there to play and to discuss the serious problems that caused us so much anguish. My parents had all 8 children study and we, the last ones were on our way towards earning a degree, so it was heartbreaking for them to see all their dreams shattered. It was for this reason that papa became ill and for a full two years was bedridden. His Cavalier's Cross, which he cherished so much was taken away from him and like all Jews we had to give up our radio. I recall as a child the excitement and joy of listening to the first broadcasts, only to be compared with that of viewing the first TV programs.

On January 6, 1941 papa died at the age of 71; because of his illness, up to that time none of us were able to move in spite of the air raid bombardments and the incumbent dangers. In the

elevator we met Nazis with swastickers on their arm, who were going to the floor above ours, to the home of the Gheislers, watchmakers, who said they were Swiss, but who were actually German spies. We lived in terror and so after papa's death, I was 20, we were able to save ourselves just in time, by escaping and hiding, and so began our flight; mother, Emma, Anna and I. Often I visited Gastone's grandparents Emma and Ugo Castelli, they had welcomed me with much affection and I in return was very fond of them. Gastone stayed with them along with his brother Vittorio and his mother, because his father, Giorgio was in France. He was an anti-fascist and during a trip to Corsica he was arrested and was brought to the Dominican jail in Livorno and from there to the border at Urbisaglia (near Ancona).

Meanwhile, Gastone prepared for the final examinations of the Istituto Tecnico Superiore and Emma tutored him in Italian, History and Geography. He passed his exams with flying colors. In 1941, Gastone was summoned along with other Jewish young men to work at Collalnetti. He would leave early in the morning on the five o'clock train; the job consisted in shoveling the bottom of a stream, La Tora, to make the river bed even. I obtained a job as secretary in a company of lubricants directed by Mr. Osea Coppini a friend of my brother Mario. I enjoyed my job very much and learned stenography. I also tried to make myself useful at home, since we were not allowed to have any servants and so I began my practice as a housewife.

On Dec. 27, 1941, we had a little party for our engagement, at my house and on Jan. 11, 1942 at the Castelli's house; I saved a few petals of the red roses that Gastone had given me for the occasion. He gave me a pretty little ring that belonged to the Orefici family and I gave him a silver cigarette case.

Chapter 2: Flights in Italy

Shortly after papa passed away, especially because of the air raids, we moved to a stupendous villa on the sea, Castiglioncello, the Villa was called "Il Sorriso". We had a downhill road to the sea and an enchanting view so that mother, Emma, Anna and I, notwithstanding the times, enjoyed this dreamlike place. My employer also had transferred his office to Castilgioncello and for a time I was able to continue working. However, after that winter, towards summer a law was passed that Jews were not permitted to stay in resort places; so we were obliged to leave and from there we began our peregrinations and our worst period of escapes, hiding places, alarms and bombings. The house of the Castellis in Via Borsi was bombed and by a miracle they were saved by taking refuge in the basement of the neighbors. From there they went to Bolgheri to stay with Tabets who had a factory and a beautiful villa. Gastone had gone that day with his mother to accompany his father to Urbisaglia where he had been transferred with other anti-fascists. Upon his return, seeing his grandparents home in shambles he feared for their lives and for those of his cousin Lattes and his brother Vittorio who was with them. He obtained a ticket and joined them in Balgheri. From Castiglioncello we went to Colle Montanino at the home of some peasant who knew Elio's parents. They gave mother a bedroom in their own home. But we three slept in a barn crawling with mice and at night we were terrorized of them. I liked the simple life with the peasants and I adapted to it. It was difficult to find food except at the black market. I gave lessons to some youngsters who in exchange brought me some meat, flour or eggs. It was in those days that the famous July 25, 1943 took place! What a marvelous event: the Fall of Mussolini!! His arrest and deportation to Gran Sasso! The joy which at first had been suffocated in the fear that it was not true, exploded in full and we all looked as if we had gone mad! We were singing and dancing in the streets and I was sorry not to have Gastone with me to rejoice together. In town the Roman fasces was demolished with a scalpel. I thought that peace was now close and that this was the beginning of the end of so much anguish--what an illusion! Instead Sept. 8 arrived with the inevitable consequences. The long waited armistice brought the worst confusion. Fascists and Nazis in flight made raids and abuses of power and victory was very far away. They came to look for us and we had to leave the Colle and just in time. We split up so as not to draw attention to ourselves. Thievery, pillage, innocent victims, indescribable horrors caused us to live in great anxiety. After hours and hours of reveling in a cart and wondering, I found myself with Silvia and her son Paolo who was three, in Volterra with relatives of her husband Elio. We had to remain enclosed in a basement room with the blinds always closed, without making the least bit of noise. I felt suffocated, the day never ended and Silvia was terrorized for her child and was never at peace, she was startled with fright at the smallest noise, while

I tried to keep Paolo as calm as possible, I would have liked to be able to join Gastone, but I didn't have the heart to leave Silvia and her child alone. In the meantime mamma, Emma, and Anna were in hiding at the Monticellli Convent and I was quite tranquil about their safety. Gastone with his brother and cousin were obliged to flee and take refuge in a shepard's hut in the vicinity of Volterra.

My thoughts often turned to our dear ones far away in America: Mario with Lisa and their four girls, and Lina who left to join them a few months after their departure and to whom I said goodbye with so much grief and anguish! Who knows how much they worried about us, we could not communicate anything to one another. In the meanwhile I heard from Gino of our three cousins in Rome, one had died as a result of wounds during a bombing and the other two...deported in sealed cars! Gino had warned them and had proposed that they go with him and his wife, Franca, but they would not follow him. A similar fate could have been ours! Any destiny seemed possible to me provided that I could face it with Gastone near me.

November 6, 1943: Silvia with her good heart pushed me to leave Florence but I was desperate at the idea of leaving her alone with the baby. What should I do? I thought intensely of my father and I prayed that he might help us and bless us. During the night between six and seven we heard repeated knocking both at the door and at the window and for a moment we had a great scare that someone had informed on us. Instead it was Gastone with his brother and cousin who proposed that I join them to flee to Switzerland. We were supposed to go to Florence to make contacts with Raffaele Cantoni who would then have indicated to us a way to smuggle across the border. Elsa, Mario's sister, was to join us also. We were five young people around twenty years old, ready to face any danger and discomfort just to be safe. I did not hesitate to accept even if I was greatly worried about all my dear ones. Silvia, despite her tears and deeply moved, encouraged me to leave and gave us two gold coins that she had brought from Hungary. We covered them and pinned them under our shirt to use in case of emergency. When we arrived at the Monticelli Convent, with joy and amazement, mother gave me her permission to leave. Emma, although inclined to agree to it, was not much in favor of the departure fearing that we would encounter further serious dangers. I was very attracted to the idea, perhaps in the recklessness of my youth I was fascinated by the adventure and had complete faith in Gastone. I had not yet met my future father-in-law. I barely knew him by sight and a little by heresay, and I was afraid of him, knowing that he had a nervous temperament and that he was a man out of the ordinary. It was then in Florence, at the convent, agitated by so many worries, that I found myself with him. There was a heated discussion and at the end of the morning a positive decision was reached and we all went out to dinner almost in good spirits and very excited. In the afternoon, Augusto, my sister-in-law's brother, came and it was

because of him that our whole project went up in smoke. He found this flight at such a moment to be insane and in addition he insinuated that it was not proper since Gastone and I were not married, that we should travel together. Because of the circumstances this was absurd and it made me nervous that such an idiotic thought should come from him, of all people. In addition we also went to Cantoni for advice, but the caretaker told us to run away because there were Germans right in Cantoni's house who were looking for him and we barely escaped in time. We found out that at the border, German police had been added to the Italian guards. So from the excitement at the idea of a flight towards freedom, began another period of reclusion, me at the convent of nuns, Gastone, Vittorio and Mario in an old priest's monastery. My in-laws left in the direction of Norcia and left Elsa with us.

November 19, 1943: Silvia was informed and shortly after she too came to Florence to stay with our dear friends the Bezans. I remained at Monticelli with mother, Emma and Anna. The first period transpired almost serenely. I was curious and interested in the life of the sisters, some of them young, attractive and very nice. I looked for instructive books in the library that was well stocked, especially and naturally, with religious books. I also began to study French and English. In addition I was delighted to resume piano lessons with a lovely young woman Luciana Baldetti. With her were here mother and her sister Paola. They were not Jewish , but sought refuge from the bombing. We became good friends. As time went on I was getting bored and I was especially sad no to be able to see Gastone. We telephoned each other a few rare times, but knowing that the phones might be tapped and with the complicity of the servant Carlo, we spoke to each other as if I were a nun and he one of the priests, using appropriate phrases; one time he risked coming out, but we were able to talk to one another only in the visitors room across a grate. Since the convent was also a boarding school, we had to join the girls for prayer and rosary.

November 21, 1943: What a beautiful surprise today! All three boys came and I obtained permission to go out. We took a little walk, Gastone brought me some roses and I was moved and happy as in the old days. But when we separated, I felt a pang, like a foreboding: when would we see each other again? Vittorio took me aside and begged me to avoid having them go out for a certain time because the danger had increased greatly and the three of them decided not to separate. They could be arrested not only for being Jews, but because they were of draft age.

November 30, 1943: The foreboding I had at leaving Gastone came true; the Germans were searching for Jews from house to house and they made no exceptions for convents. They burst in both where we were staying and where Gastone was. The mother superior made us go and kept only Anna because she said one single person was easier to hide among the boarders or the sisters. Besides, they were glad to

have her because she was allowing herself to be influenced by the atmosphere. So the three of us arrived at Silvia's , not knowing what else to do. We found her frightened, beside herself. We could not stay there for the Bezan family was already taking risks for her. She advised us to split up, Emma with a woman who would take her as a boarder, and mother and I would stay at Boccanera where Elio had some land and we could pass as peasants. She would notify Elio's father, Luigi, who would come to pick us up at Volterra with a cart, right at the place where I had already stayed with her and Paola. Augusto, with some ink remover had changed the ending of our name from Ottolenghi to Ottolini, in that way it would be more authentic than to get new false ones which many attempted to do.

November 30, 1943: What a desperate situation I find myself in! I am once more in that house in Volterra, but with mother this time. After a disastrous trip, arriving at night, the Sozzi (this is their real name, meaning filthy in Italian) would not even open the door; they tell us that a German commander has been stationed nearby and that they did not want to take any risks for us. I felt for them, but what could I do? During the walk from the bus to the house, Mother had panicked and she was crying and didn't want to go any further. I had the suitcases and was frantic. I had to scold her, telling her to hold on to my arm and to continue. She wanted me to leave her because she thought she was a hindrance to me, and that alone I would be able to make it. She didn't want me to be taken because of her. The trip from Florence lasted five and a half hours, standing and jammed, and in a few hours we must take another bus. Where shall we go? Mr. Luigi had not come. After begging them, I managed to obtain one more day; I slept on a marble top table and a blanket, I got up full of aches and pains. How to continue travelling in the dark with mother who was so unwilling? On the window is a ladybug - for a moment I look at it thinking and hoping it might bring me good luck. Instead, poor thing, it died. Besides, in order to travel, one needed a permit from city hall, and Paola Baldetti had obtained one in her name and one for mother with her mother's name. But it was only valid one way! Si I bolstered my courage and added with my own handwriting "and return trip"!

And you my dear Gastone, by now you must have arrived in Norcia at your relatives' place. We never even said goodbye and Saturday I thought you were still in Florence. Thinking that you were in the same city gave me a feeling of security, but the next day, when I found out that you had left I felt weak and lost as if you had abandoned me alone to my destiny. I saw your father who had come to look for some blankets. In saying goodbye to him I felt such a pang for it was the last link I had with you and he was leaving me. I almost would have liked him to suggest that I leave with him; perhaps I would not have accepted but I was sorry to observe that it was not at all his intention or desire. What a personality he had! When I called your monastery and they led me to understand

that all three of you had fled precipitously from a secret exit, I felt I was dying! I told your father that he had to take charge of Elsa so he accompanied her to the station so she might take a train and return to Bolgheri to her relatives.

December 3, 1943: I am in Milano!!! I would have imagined anything but not to come here! But let's proceed logically. The first was a fateful day: we repeated with terror the journey from home to the bus station. At the departure from Volterra at four in the morning, a fascist commander in uniform with a big belt and revolver and black boots planted himself in front of me asking for my tickets and documents. I had one for Paola Baldetti, who was almost ten years older than me, and mother had her mothers, I showed it to him and he stared at me for the longest time, I had terrible palpitations but I tried to answer his questions with assurance: where I was going, why, etc... He was especially unconvinced about my age. When he turned to mother I said that she was totally deaf to avoid contradicting her. He allowed us to leave! Perhaps he had understood and wished to save us.

We arrived in Florence after a long and tiring trip also because there were three raids along the road. When Silvia saw us come back... we also found Gino, who, because he was worried about us, wanted to take us to Castelfranco where he had found refuge with Franca and his little boy Umberto. We think of going to inform Emma who was quite surprised to see us. She thought that we were in Volterra and from there to Boccanera. The lady with whom she was staying did not know that we were Jewish and we found an excuse for the move, that we wished to find a place more sheltered from the bombings. We introduced Gino as Emma's fiance, since he had a false document with last name different than ours. Emma at the last moment decided to join us.

CHAPTER 3: FLIGHT TO THE SWISS BORDER

It is from this moment that the most dramatic events take place. We are at a crucial point and the real flight begins. After we left Emma's quarters we had a long distance to cover, through a street in Piazza Cavour where we would take the trolley for the station and from there the train for Castelfranco di sotto. Gino and mother were walking arm in arm and we were talking about our plans when we arrived after dark in Piazza Cavour. There was a curfew at 10 o'clock and we were not allowed to walk around. The trolley was late and Gino began to lose his patience fearing that it would get to be past ten, I tried to calm him down. There was a man in civilian clothes near us but we had not noticed him initially. When the trolley finally arrived, he got on behind us and got off with us at the station. It was so cold that we headed for the cafe to warm up a little. I had barely put my hand on the door handle when I felt someone holding me by the arm and that man who had followed us the whole time and had listened to our conversation says " German Police". He pushes me to one side and asks me so many questions: first name, last name, where I was going and why, where I was from etc... and at the end in good Italian he said "You are a Jew?" Despite the terror I felt inside, I denied it and managed to answer calmly and with assurance and to deny it. He asked me what relationship there was with Gino, since we spoke in the familiar "tu" form, and with the others. I answered that we were engaged and for this reason he had a certain familiarity with my mother. He even made me cross myself (fortunately at the convent I had learned to do it) and finished by saying to me, "But you have Jewish relatives" and he wanted to know the names of the various grandparents, a lesson which we had studied previously. He then interrogated Emma who corroborated the story we had agreed upon. When he approached mother who remained quiet with her eyes opened wide, considering her previous conduct, we hurried to say she was deaf. He then turned to Gino who was very pale and was trembling and asked him for his identification card which being new and with a false name did not satisfy him at all and he therefore wished other documents which could prove his identity, among which his ration card which he did not have. He then told him that he was under arrest and that we others could go and get our tickets for the train. We felt ourselves dying for Gino's sake. At that moment a providential alarm raid put everyone in a state of general confusion and there was a general stampede toward the air raid shelter since the railroad stations were usually a target for bombings. We blessed that alarm and pushed Gino out urging him to escape. He did not want to leave us, but we implored him to do so. He ran away flattening himself against the walls like a thief and finally arrived on foot to Silvia's place where terrorized, she procured a bicycle for him and as God willed it pedaling all night he succeeded in arriving at Franca's house, tired, defeated, with a high fever and crying out in delirium "they

took mother, Emma and Lea because of me". We went with the others to an underground shelter and waited a full six hours seated on our suitcases, for the all clear signal to sound. We went out with the fear of being followed, thinking that the policeman had put someone on our heels to spy on us, so that it was sufficient for any one to just look at us for us to be startled. So we decided to take the train to Castelfranco as we had declared to the policeman. We had to change trains at Viareggio, where we waited what seemed to be an eternity, for the connecting train, but then changed plans deciding to go Milano instead where Amadeo would have been able to help us in the difficult situation. I remember that we were hungry and so tired but I congratulated myself for having overcome the danger with so much composure and cleverness. The suitcases seemed to be made of lead and I decided to abandon one. We had a little bite there at the station (without ration cards we did not have the right to obtain meat or bread) and we could not think of going to rest in a hotel where we would be asked for documents, and would have to register. Emma and I decided to alternate staying with mother. Finally, in the late evening, the train arrived, It was very crowded and full of German military personnel. Everything was in the dark because of the curfew and I felt myself being pulled by the arm inside a compartment of Germans: "thank you, thank you" I said in German and I managed to pull loose crying out: "are there any Italians here". A naval officer came towards me and said "come, come miss, I have a reserved compartment" (thinking I was alone, he was being very gallant) but I went to find mother and Emma and finally we sat down and were more tranquil. The naval officer, whose name was Virgilio, was with someone else and asked me "you seem very frightened, right?" I admitted this to him and told him it was because of the air raids, Germans and everything else, hiding from him the real reason of my fear and panic. He gave me a book with an inscription that I saved, and as long as we were with them we felt safe. In Sarzana, we had to change trains, Virgilio and his friend had to take a military vehicle and suggested that I go along with them to a safe place, but alone, I did not accept, but had a cup of fake coffee with them and took a short walk around the area. I behaved very seriously and correct but I felt that he liked me and I was both pleased and shocked.

From my diary: My dear Gastone, I'm constantly thinking of you, I can't wait to see you to tell you all the extraordinary adventures, my greatest pain is that I'm going farther and farther away from you, and you can't track me down any longer nor can you imagine where I am. If you were near me I would be calmer and more confident, but I feel I'm heading towards disaster. Will you be able to join me one day?

So as we were sitting between bags and suitcases we waited for hours on end for the train for Milano - I was trying to think straight and organize my thoughts which were in states of utmost confusion, and once on the train I asked myself what was to become of me. A serviceman kindly offered me a sandwich, he was Italian,

and I appreciated it very much. When we were going through a tunnel, Emma heard someone whisper "Are you ms. Ottolenghi?". Her face suddenly became pale and panic ran through her so much that someone came to me to tell me that she was not well; I recognized her, she was Miss Canterini, our neighbor,, she was escaping like us. After many anxieties and problems we finally got to Milan. It wasn't that easy to find Amedeo, however. The poor dear was in hiding. He gave us a good dosage of hope and courage and after a good meal, he took us up to his apartment which he shared with Mr. Luciani, who was away at the time and who was also a bachelor of 23.

Dec. 3, 1943 - Finally after four sleepless nights we got to sleep on a real bed. Mamma and Emma on one bed and me on the couch in the entrance hall. It was really a young person's apartment, very messy and dirty, but at least we had a roof over our heads and we felt safer there. I fell asleep immediately and slept until ten, I was waking up to the sound of the air raid when I noticed that someone was opening the front door; a young man then came in and was not at all surprised to see me, but when he started to go into the other room I told him that Mamma and Emma were in there and then he looked surprised and rushed to the telephone to call Amedeo. The unexpected arrival of Mr. Luciani forced us to move again. Amedeo then brought us to a house where he introduced us to Anna Vigna, supposedly his landlady, but later we figured that she was more than that.

From my diary: Am I dreaming? We're eating, drinking and sleeping like normal people, and all the wonderful things that are around us! And now Amedeo has a nice proposal for us; he heard that some smugglers, for the right price could show us a way to get to Switzerland. I can't believe it, can it be true? But the thought of leaving without Gastone! It was going to be our big trip and now how can I let him know? I don't want to leave without him. But I have a bone to pick with him, he should have found a way to let me know where he was, I feel like he has abandoned me, something inside of me has cracked. My poor darling, forgive me, I'm bad, who knows what you're going through and how worried you must be about me. Under the circumstances, Mamma was very kind to the "landlady"... and everything went well. Poor girl, she went to a lot of trouble for us, she really must be in love. I want to remember her so I can be of help to her with whatever, in the future. One Sunday they took me to some of their friends, very weird people! Today I went roaming through the city by myself. I feel so small in such a big city unfamiliar to me, especially in front of the famous DUOMO. I was not impressed however, I preferred seeing it on a postcard. Maybe it's because there's filth and devastation around it. The store windows are full of beautiful forgotten things; I was about to buy a pair of sandals, but I had forgotten that it was war time and you needed points to buy anything and I did not have enough, I guess I'll have to do without. I feel like I'm in a daze with all the traffic and

commotion of the big city, so much different than Livorno. Finally, I decided to go into the luxurious day hotel where I'll have the luxury of taking a hot bath. In fact, I come out of there feeling euphoric. I try not to think of anything and enjoy the sweet excitement of being alone in this big city which I've wanted to visit for such a long time. Suddenly I hear music, it hits me, it's the Blue Danube Waltz, I stop to listen to it. I'm completely moved with a very deep emotion, tears are falling down my cheeks and a great urge to see you my dear Gastone envelopes me, I want you my love, I wish I could have you near me at this moment. I feel alone and lost; I then start to run towards home, with a great despair in my heart, where are you? What are you doing? I wrote you a letter where your father told me you would be, but I don't know if you received it or if the address is correct. For fear of it being censored, I wrote it as if I were a nun, with proper language, etc. and pretending I was writing it to a priest and I put my last 10 lire in the envelope for the poor of the parish. Between the lines it was understood that I was about to go where we had previously planned (Gastone did receive the letter and saved the 10 lire). Emma, Mamma and Amedeo convinced me to leave with them, I was really very hesitant about going, I had not heard from Gastone and my heart was torn, but at that moment it was nearly impossible to receive any news at all from anybody. Will you ever receive my letter? Will you understand? This is what I keep asking myself and I fear I'll never receive an answer; oh my God help me, let me see him again soon.

December 8, 1943
My dear Gastone, I need you desperately, I feel that my letter won't reach you in time, my family is urging me to go with them and I can't absolutely leave without you. I'm torturing myself to find a plausible solution, I'm going to try to get to you, but how? Time is running short and with terror the moment of decision is close. My darling is it possible that you don't hear my call for help? It would be so wonderful if we could leave together! With all these problems I can't sleep nights, I'm constantly turning my brain to find a way to contact you. In what situation are you in? I feel resentment towards your father who indirectly caused our separation, I would have followed you anywhere and we had agreed not to be apart from one another. But it is useless to think back, may God help us, that we may find one another safe and sound! But I will absolutely not leave without you.

December 10, 1943
Up to the last minute we thought we were going to leave today, but now it seems we have to wait two more days. Oh if only a miracle would happen. Let's hope!

December 12, 1943
Dear Diary, I have to leave you, who knows when I'll be able to write again. I'm going away, the miracle did not happen. I'm desperate, I'm leaving you Gastone and you don't know where I am,

who knows if and when we'll be in each others arms again! Papa protect us and give us your blessing.

Night between 18 and 19 of December - Passage to border.
At first Amedeo asked for Anna Vigna's help and then from another friend, Paolo, to arrive near the border. He had contacted some smugglers, mamma had paid 60,000 lire for each one of us. She gave one piece of jewelry to Anna Vigna, one to Paolo and the rest we divided among ourselves, we hid them in a rag pocket sewn inside our clothes, we were to use them only in extreme emergency. The smugglers had already contacted the soldiers on duty in both the Italian and Swiss borders.

Bellinzona Dec. 20, 1943
We're free! We took the big step, we're in the land of freedom. I would like to yell to the world: "Lea Ottolenghi, I'm Jewish" But my happiness is not complete, you are missing, Gastone! What I wouldn't give to have you here and enjoy the re-conquered freedom. You should see the beautiful places; but now I'm locked in with 30 other people and we sleep with our clothes on a pile of straw, but it's not important, no more nightmares, repressions and terrors, freedom of body and soul!

I must now take my story a few days back: the four of us, after leaving Milan, took a small train to Varese and crossed the most beautiful country side ever, that if you had been with me Gatsone, I would have thought it was a pleasure trip. At a certain point we separated, Amadeo went with mamma and Emma with me. The two of us went to Luino, pretending we were looking for a place to get away from the bombardments. We saw some houses on the way to the border, as we got closer to it we saw beyond the bridge the so much longed for Switzerland. We could see very well the small houses of that small village, it would have taken us no time to get there, instead we went on waiting for nightfall, very still and quiet in this beautiful movie like setting. We walked quite a bit in the dark, we could see some lights far away and we could hear fanfare music as if welcoming us with joy. From this place we ran to the bridge where they shut us up in a wooden crate. Mamma started to cough, she tried so hard to suppress it since they told us that we had to be absolutely still, but I guess the dust was too much for her. After two hours, we left creeping along the walls of the smugglers' place till about midnight and then finally the big step: we started to run across the bridge without looking back, but suddenly we came upon a gate in the middle of the bridge, we had to go through a narrow opening, but Mamma being heavy couldn't do it, I hurled over my knapsack and started to push her with the others and finally we got her through. In the meantime some German guards shouted at us to stop but we kept on running leaving gun shots and barking dogs behind us. We arrived out of breath and alas we came face to face with a Swiss soldier with a gun pointed at us. "Stop", he said, "You're on Swiss territory". I thought I was dreaming, it was too good and too easy to be true. Unfortunately, the Swiss guards were

not the same ones that the smugglers had dealt with. But in our misery we were lucky, we heard later on that many Jewish people had been denounced by the same smugglers who had taken their money. When the custom officials came to examine our papers (We had to show that we were Jewish and politically persecuted) we were told that there were too many refugees in Switzerland and it was impossible to accept any more. I couldn't believe it, after all the difficulties and fears we went through, having gotten there and then....it was too much! If it had been so tough getting there, it would have meant getting captured for sure if we had to go back. I had tears in my eyes and I'd throw myself in the river rather than go back. But those good people tried to calm me down, they gave us some hot chocolate and they were very kind and understanding; they would take only mamma since they were told to take people over 65 and pregnant women. They would take the rest of us to another frontier point different from the one we just passed. Mamma did not want to stay there alone and finally they locked us all in a cell with hay on the floor and a horse blanket so we could rest the night and see in the morning if they could pressure the commander of Bellinzona into letting us stay. But how could we rest with those thoughts hanging over us and between the bitter cold and the anxiety we did not sleep a wink all night. It was then that I was thankful that Gastone was not with us to risk all this and I hoped that instead he was in a safe place.

Finally when morning came, they allowed Amedeo to call the commanding officer and thank God he succeeded in having the four of us stay. What I felt at that moment was undescribable. It was hard to believe that we had finally made it and were really safe. Poor mamma, at her age going through all this; how sad not to have the other loved ones with us. Silvia with Paolo, Gino with Franca and Umbertino, Anna and you, my dear Gastone how I cry for you. We then got into a car and they took us for a medical examination; afterward some soldiers gave us some refreshments and from there we were escorted to Bellinzona. We went by Lugano, what a beautiful place! You have been there Gastone, so you know how I felt and you should hear me how well I get along with my French! We finally arrived at some sort of police station where we were interrogated and finger printed. The women were sent to a kindergarten equipped temporarily to assemble refugees and the men were sent to another. We were constantly under military supervision; they made us take a disinfecting shower and all our clothes were disinfected as well, it was most humiliating especially when they took our clothes and after asked everyone to whom they belonged. I was shocked and I felt embarrassed especially for mamma and Emma. There was quite a bit of confusion and I was surprised at the lack of organization in these assembly camps. However, soon enough I got along very well with everyone and we helped one another. I especially helped with the little ones and there seemed to be quite a few of them. Everyone had a story to tell, compared to our adventures, they were really tragic tales. Some arrived without anything, some walked for days in the mountains with hands and feet frost bitten and some

members of families were sent back. Among these there was a young pregnant married girl about my age, she was extremely distraught because she was accepted by herself, her name was Edith Greenberger; I tried to comfort her as much as possible. We were then separated but eventually we were reunited again. When we arrived we walked all lined up along a street crowded with stores full of wonderful things: real wool clothes, leathers, real chocolate and real coffee. Unconsciously, I was emitting little cries of joy, a man was looking at me and, understanding my desires, offered me some chocolate, oh I did want to accept it, but the guide ordered us to hasten our step and with a stern look from Emma I understood that it wasn't the proper thing to do. With my utmost regret, I had to refuse. Later this same person ran after me and offered a bag of chestnuts and left. Another Swiss lady also stopped us and asked who we were and where we were from, and she then hugged us with much compassion. I must have looked ridiculous with my knapsack on my back, hiking boots and carrying bags and suitcases.

Finally, thank God, we arrived at our destination. But will I ever hear from you Gastone? I'd be happy and content if at least you knew of my whereabouts and I of yours, we could both be at peace. Now we are waiting our turn to be transferred. I'd be very happy staying here where we are, there's central heating, good air, a small garden around the house, not too much food but we can have all the milk with chocolate we want, and I usually have two bowls at a time. And now..."Incipit vita nova"...A new life begins!

Chapter 4: A New Life In Switzerland

Dec. 21, 1943 - Today we moved, they took us to the kindergarten where there's finally a chance of taking a bath. The place is bigger and we even have a cot to sleep on. For the moment we should forget about sheets, we have to be satisfied with what we're given. The accommodations are somewhat the same, but every morning we have to peel numerous bags of potatoes which are the staples of our basic meals, fortunately Switzerland grows lots of them. I would certainly be more enthusiastic about my chores if Gastone were here with me. Everything would seem more tolerable and even more enjoyable! I'm waiting hopeful for a miracle to bring you here.

Dec. 25, 1943 - Today is Christmas day. It was very touching how we all organized the tree with presents and sweets for the children. Poor kids, how they enjoyed themselves! But I feel sad and I'm surprised that since we're Jewish they didn't let us celebrate our holidays. It would have been a very solemn event if after so many tragic adventures we could have been able to celebrate Hanukkah all together. I was told that they did this at another camp. Last night I wanted to say the Scheman, I haven't said it in a long time and I almost had forgotten it, a little old lady was very moved by it, I said it with her and she gave me a little prayer book. It's very comforting and I feel a great internal joy and pride to being profoundly Jewish. Oh if papa were her with me, how proud he would be. From the male camps we get occasional notes from other people's relatives and I crave to receive some news from Gastone and think how wonderful it would have been to get notes from him and exchange our impressions. While I was deep in these thoughts a soldier came in with gifts for all of us and when I opened mine I jumped with joy at the site of chocolate and panettone, which by the way I devoured immediately. I wanted to be in a good mood. The day after tomorrow we will move again!

The wake up call is at 6:45 and after a watery cup of coffee with milk I start my job with broom and rags - everything has to shine. I got assigned a couple of hours teaching the children and then we get the cafeteria ready for lunch - afterwards we clear up and clean off the tables. At night, supper is at 6:00 P.M. and after clearing up we are free and we can listen to the radio, our only consolation! We sleep in a huge room with many windows. I had the privilege from the same commanding officer, to sleep in one of the smaller rooms (called "le ortensie") where one slept on a real horsehair mattress on the floor with a quilt - with no sheets of course! In the big dormitory we had a big sack of hay to sleep on. I willingly gave up this privilege to Emma who was not well - but it broke my heart to see Mamma get adjusted to these conditions - what was worse was the room was so crowded and everyone was on top of one another. In the morning before breakfast we had to take our sack and put it out the window to air together with the blanket, we

had to sweep and clean the room well. My first day of work in Rovio was quite hard - as soon as I had finished breakfast the cook calls me (a terrible man whom everyone was terrified of) and tells me to go out in the courtyard and stack up all the wood according to the size of the pieces, it was bitter cold, I had on a very lightweight dress that they had given us - of course I wasn't used to this kind of work and I kept dropping the pieces and sometimes fell on my feet and breaking my fingernails. After two hours of this my hands were frostbitten and bleeding and my head was aching. A soldier saw me and took pity on me and finished the job for me. Afterwards I was assigned to clean bathrooms - I got nauseous at the beginning, but then I got used to it. I then washed the floors in the cafeteria and dormitory - my only consolation was that I was able to shower - only I felt embarrassed getting undressed in front of so many people. There were many foreign women who did not think anything of taking their clothes off in public - but I guess this is something else that I have to get used to. The place is really beautiful, though, surrounded by mountains, by the lake the colors are vibrant and even if it's the end of December, the sun feels good while we are walking in the woods. There is a lot of discipline being in a military regime and we have to follow orders like little toy soldiers. It's hard at the beginning, but I'm sure I will get better. Tonight I'm very tired, I'm going straight to bed, however we have to turn the lights out at ten.

December 31, 1943 - Today after I finished my work the cook called me once again - I had to pull out so many carrots out of a pot filled with ice water that my hands were hurting. We have to be patient and submit to everything lest they could treat us brutally. I wiped stacks and stacks of dishes, flatware, huge pots and pans, etc. and then they yelled at me for not having done a good job - who do they think we are!

The chaplain came, he was such a dear, I was able to talk to him and he promised he would send messages from me to America and Hungary. Today Emma was really sick, she was running a high fever and I had to go through hell to have her examined and treated a little more humanly - and finally they put her in the infirmary where I hope she can sleep on a real bed even without sheets. I hope it's nothing and she'll soon get better and leave this place real soon. It's a real problem when one gets sick here - there's no compassion and I thank God that I'm healthy and that I'm able to put up with anything. Today is the last day of this terrible year - the worst in my whole life!I'll remember it always, month by month with all the terrible events from the beginning to the end. As usual we always hope that the new year will be a better one and will bring peace so that we can be reunited with our loved ones! It's so sad... we won't wait as usual for midnight - Emma is in bed sick, Mamma and myself are one more depressed than the other worrying about Anna, Gino, Silvia, and everybody. And for me, my biggest worry is Gastone and the biggest question mark "Where are you?" and "How are you?" keeps nagging at me - my love, may God

help you and may he let us be in each other's arms soon. I live only for this and I endure everything only for this hope. Many today received gift packages from their relatives or friends we have such little money that tomorrow we will buy some apples so we can eat some fruit. Here they don't celebrate, but they gave us an omelette with some sugar on top that I appreciated very much. They picked me to sing in the choir tomorrow, we have to sing the Swiss National Anthem in front of the authorities. I like it, it sounds like the English one. What I would give to have you see me, Gastone. My love, you know what my wish is for you - I'm sending you all the blessings!

The day that I arrived, an older lady said a prayer and we lit the Kanuka, improvised with a piece of wood and some candles, and then we sang some of our hymns and the Tiova which pleased and moved me very much and made me feel closer to you my dear Gastone, and I wish you all the best possible

January 2, 1944
New year is also gone , the saddest in my life - It presents itself with a big question mark! I worked more than usual and after the usual hardships in the kitchen with the terrible cook (he's a good devil deep down) having put everything in its place and cleaning it to a shine, I was able to get on his good graces and he gave me a delicious cup of real hot chocolate, the best I had ever had, and some toasted bread. Dinner had been better than the usual water broth and then we sang the Swiss National Anthem all together.

Emma stayed in bed - the fever went down, but she's very weak, but today being Mamma"s birthday, she wanted to get up. Poor Mom, what a birthday! Courage! We appreciated receiving a letter from Roberto, the only relative that we have here, and we felt less lonely and abandoned!They've given me too many jobs, clean toilets, teach high school children, head of the table (I have to distribute the food, set the table, clear the table, and get up before the others to prepare breakfast), kitchen helper, and now they want me to do the laundry too! No more! Mamma had her turn of ten days to peel potatoes for hours in a damp basement, but if you think of it we all do this work for ourselves, but there are ways and ways of letting us work. Yesterday we had our picture taken, finger printed and questioned by the police. Now I can't commit any crime - what a shame!

1944 - You presented yourself very dreary and haggard - I hope that later we're in for a good surprise - but soon please!

Jan. 5, 1944 - I feel great sadness in me, up to now I tried to keep busy to let time pass faster and not to think of that which torments me. But the usual thought haunts me - where are you Gastone? Are you thinking of your Pusse so depressed and longing for you? Today I have a "spleen" (as you used to say) and I feel

that things are going to go on for much longer, not weeks but months and months of this muddled life with no goal. I try to divert my mind, talk to others, by now I'm familiar with everybody's tragedy with all its details and even if I'm well liked there are always the gossips, the small envies for some little privilege that one obtains once in a while from working like a slave. But we must be patient! From the time we get up before 7 until we go to bed at night after 10 there's always a buzzing and droning that drives one crazy.

When I'm free, I often go walking in the woods by myself - only my thoughts keep me company, the lake often changes colors, sometimes deep gray then blue but always very still like a mirror. I try to live my own interior life with a spirituality that helps me endure these events. At times at night when it's finally quiet, I close my eyes and I relive in my mind the happy days and sweet events where your figure, Gastone, is so prominent that it fills my entire life, and then, if I fall asleep I wake up feeling disoriented and with great sadness I realize where I am.

Now I'm back sleeping in the "ortensie" I'm among very eccentric people. There's one who likes to show off her silk nightgowns and robes, and smokes etc. Another supervises the work shifts and she's so serious about it that at night she talks about it constantly, takes notes and I think she even dreams about it at night. An older Russian lady snores terribly and everyone makes fun of her, another young girl is so painfully shy that she goes through great lengths to dress and undress without being noticed (very much like myself), while another one dresses and undresses with gusto, showing off her bare parts. So many different types! Among these there are women with plenty of money and who also spend it, others receive packages from friends and relatives, they open them at night and in the morning take bites of the most delicious sweets right in front of my eyes! I feel like a little kitten waiting for the crumbs to fall my way - but nothing!In the kitchen sometimes I see preparations for special gourmet foods, once they offered me some leftovers on the plate. I refused vehemently the first time, but the other times I was offered they didn't have to ask me twice. (This, of course happens very seldom.) More than anything else I miss eating bread.

Some pregnant women take advantage of the situation. They are excused from doing chores and get double portions and milk, butter, and cheese besides. I see them stuffing themselves and they have the disgusting impression of being pregnant animals. One of these is a tall blonde who gives herself many airs in her fur coat. She always wants to get in our group asking a lot of questions, faking interest in our lives. I really don't like her. She gets on line twice to get double portions. Her name is Viola. Later on I found out that she was sent away. It seems that she was a spy, who was trying to get from us the names and addresses of the anti-fascists still in Italy, and she pretended to be pregnant so

she didn't have to work and she could eat more. Now we have an epidemic of scarlet fever. We can't send out any mail and quarantine has to be extended every time there is a new case. I hope I don't get it - I sleep next to a woman with two children who were sent to the hospital. But I wouldn't mind I guess - I hear that they treat you well in the hospital. Twice a day we have to gargle to disinfect our throats, but they should take other precautions. In the kitchen I have to wash the dishes in boiling water with lots of caustic soda to try and eliminate more cases, but my hands are terribly red and irritated. Today I had to do a very horrible and nauseating chore that it took my strong stomach to endure it. Thank God for my good health and stamina. I notice that sooner or later everybody catches something. I try to give a hand to the doctor who seems to have her hands full right now. I worry about Mamma, she doesn't complain, but to see her leading this kind of life without a minimum of comfort at her age, and with her needs. I try to alleviate her burdens as much as possible, and when I have time I take her place peeling potatoes - Carry on Lea! Reality is quite different than dreams. My dream was to have a little house to share with Gastone, as a young woman though, so I could be a young and up to date mommy to Giorgino (the name we had picked out for our first boy) a happy playmate, instead even if everything goes well, I'll be a mature bride, serious and boring, while you Gastone, I'm sure will keep yourself young and full of life! Enough now of these evil thoughts!

January 6, 1944
Today papa is the anniversary of your death. I feel the greatest pain and discomfort - the only consolation is that you are not suffering in seeing us go through these humiliations and miseries. I look out to the hills, the small houses scattered here and there with reflection on the lake and I wonder if the families who inhabit them are aware of those other families like them who had to leave their hearth and hold on to their little ones despairing for their survival. I think of them in their warm cozy houses preparing dinner for their husbands who will soon be home from work, and the children happily waiting for their father surrounded by all the comforts which so many of us, alas are lacking and missing. Papa, protect us, I feel your presence even here, I feel your soul warming my heart which grows colder and colder as the time goes by. When there was a struggle to undertake, I fought and reacted but now I feel like a leaf being blown away by the wind that has to be lead by someone elses will. I feel that my strength is abandoning me. I'm becoming passive and without desires. My individuality is suppressed and seems to become nonexistent. But I hear an inner voice that shakes me up and compels me to hope. I have many dear ones who love me and worry for me. What would Gastone say if he saw me in these conditions. He would not recognize his "Pusse" so brave and strong.But maybe it's the nostalgic sound of the music I'm listening to on the radio. I'm brave! I'm back hoping. The news on the radio is good! Russia has invaded Poland - hurrah! I don't want to deceive myself but peace

is close!

Today again I had to do the usual chore and I was so disgusted that I felt sick. Even the commander noticed and he promised to take care of it. My hands are so chapped and calloused that I could very well compare them with those of my former maids. Here where I don't have anything, I think of you Gastone, how right you were in feeling so strongly about the little items of cleanliness and toiletries. I'm trying to do my best, and even in these situations you can tell apart the real ladies from the phonies. We were told that if there were no more cases of disease next week we'll change location. I hope it will be an improvement. Tonight I was really frightened. Emma felt ill and they called me in urgency. She had one of her usual crisis but then she felt better. But today was so painfully sad for me and this particular incident shocked me and made me cry out of a much repressed rebellion.To see mamma and Emma lying on those sacs on the floor and not be able to do anything for them brings me to despair, from the doctor I obtained a few extra attentions and care for them and to give Emma the necessary injections, I hope she doesn't get sick here, it would be a real disaster. I don't want them to go down that airless and humid basement to peel potatoes for hours and hours, I'd rather take their chores for them. A good samaritan called me and gave me two left over omelettes filled with jelly with sugar on top. I couldn't believe how long it had been since I had eaten something so delicious. I ran to share them with mamma and Emma, hiding from the others, it would have been disastrous if they had seen me.

Jan. 7, 1944 - During the night I woke up suddenly with hunger pangs. It took me a long time to fall asleep again. I had the visions of my roommates chewing on the delicious morsels as they do every night. I finally reached the end of my turn to wash toilets, we'll see what I get next, in the meantime I did my laundry in ice cold water and my hands are like frost bitten. Tonight during mail call I felt a sense of envy for those who were holding in their hands letters and cards from their loved ones. When will I even hear from you my dear, and also from you my dear Anna, I'm so worried, I would like to learn that you're well and nothing has happened to you. It's better that you stayed there compared to this, it's a paradise and you're treated with humanity, and you sleep in a real bed and your chores are more uplifting then mine and who knows all the good food you're eating. And I'm also thinking of you Silvia with your little Paoletto, little dear whose photograph I have here with me and show off with great pride. And you, Gino, Franca, Umbertino, to have even just one line from you that would reassure us. I never felt so much love for you as I do now and which keeps us close. I miss you too Anna, I'm sure that due to such sad circumstances even if we fought at times, we would have learned to know one another and would get along well. Life is so hard and it teaches us so much. During this period I've learned so much, I've had a great experience with being in contact with so many different people from all walks of life and from all different

countries. I learned to know and to value myself and to be able to cope; I probably lost that open trust and that naivete that I had of the world, I adopted some faults necessary to survive and stay afloat in the tough day to day life and I don't know whether to congratulate myself or feel sorry for that world that I made up in my head. But unfortunately it's more useful to remove every illusion one has and look at reality without frills and fantasies. I'm glad that Emma is well, she is such a comfort to me and without so many words we understand one another very well.

January 8, 1944
A ray of sunshine has brightened our horizons; Amedeo wrote to us with news from our dear ones. But nothing yet from Gastone! I'm happy to hear that Gino and Anna will be coming here to Switzerland, In fact maybe they have already arrived. I wonder when we'll know and be able to see them. Oh Anna, you have no idea at the joy I feel when I think that I'll see you again, to be able to touch you and tell you of all my adventures. I'll do my chores more willingly at the thought. Today I started my turn in the kitchen - it's rather tiring. I have to be there all day and slave rather hard, too, but I'm also gaining something. Tonight I'm tired, but happier. I wonder if Anna will bring me news of Gastone - if not I'll blame him, he had the duty to let me know something. Unfortunately we still have the quarantine for the scarlet fever so we can't write to anyone. I hope this disease will soon end so we can join our newly arrived loved ones. Today I had a long talk with the guard who got on my case. Even the terrible cook is kinder now and he calls me "bambinona" or "little one" and he gives me some sweets, and he confided that tomorrow we are having nothing else but ravioli. After so many watery broths I am greatly pleased. I can't wait to see Gino and Anna.

January 10, 1944
Hooray! A wonderful surprise - we heard that our dear ones have all arrived - everyone except Gastone! I'm ecstatic to know that finally all my family is safe. They arrived on the sixth (Papa helped us). The only sadness I have now is Gastone's absence. My love, what has happened to you? I hope they will be able to give me some news.

January 11, 1944
Unfortunately my hopes were in vain. Gino wrote that he hasn't heard anything from Gastone and that he has lost all contacts. There's no use deceiving myself - I'm so depressed and I'm despairing - I don't think I can be patient for more months and months. I have the most catastrophic thoughts coming to my mind. Is it possible that Gastone could not have found a way to get in touch with me, thinking I was still in Italy? Either his father forbade him to do it or something awful has happened to him. Every time this thought attacks me, I can't stop the tears from coming. Even today as I was drying the stack of dishes in the kitchen, when I received Gino's letter wiping out all my hopes, I started to sob

uncontrollably and even the cook took pity on me and tried to comfort me with a jelly omelette, but it didn't work. Nothing matters anymore - I don't care about freedom or staying here - everything is indifferent. I will try to work as hard as possible so I don't have to think of my sadness. Now that I know that my family is safe, I'd like to run away to Italy to look for you, Gastone. I'm convinced that I would find you, and if something has happened to you I would not be responsible of my actions. I wish I could do it and even if it seems risky, I think I could do it. But right now we're in quarantine so I can't try anything. Today, eight more cases of scarlet fever - the hospitals are full. Here they did a major disinfection, but it's useless. Last night together with my roommates, I had to go to another dormitory which had already been disinfected and to my shock and chagrin, when we reached the room we were told to take off all our clothes so they could also be disinfected. The worst part was that I didn't have any other clothes in the room except for a very flimsy nightgown - so I didn't sleep all night from the cold. I was shivering all night, we only have one blanket and I didn't have my woolen undershirt that I was accustomed to wearing, plus the window was wide open to let out the strong odor from the disinfectant (from the open window one could see the beautiful crests of the mountains covered with snow). The commander came to see us and with the soldiers and policemen they must have had a good laugh at our expense - What scenes! I felt sorry for the old ladies with their pantaloons trimmed with lace - everybody laughed at that. I'm glad that Mamma and Emma were not subjected to this humiliation because they slept in the opposite wing. I was terribly embarrassed - we don't have any rights, even to ourselves or our small privacy. If I had been in a different state of mind I probably would have laughed at this whole scenario - come on Lea, you have to be brave, there will be more! My God, thank you for saving my loved ones!

January 15, 1944
Today was a terrible day for my morale - I worked all day and I was humiliated. After I finished my usual chores, The cook asked me to clean out a big refrigerator inside a small room. I had to clean it out very thoroughly and defrost it first and then I could help myself to two apples from a sack. The refrigerator had some blood drippings which made me sick to my stomach. It was a tough job, but I finished, I took the two apples promised to me and ran out the door to share them with Mamma and Emma. In the hall however, I met a Dutch refugee who stopped me and wanted to know what I had in my pockets. When she saw the apples she reacted violently, calling me a thief that I was compromising the reputation of all the refugees and she wouldn't believe that the apples were given to me. How is this possible? There's always a thorn in my side - I try to think positively, to think of the beautiful things that have happened in my life, but nothing appeases me, everything causes a deep melancholy in me, and as far as the future is concerned, I better not think about it. I'm not deceiving myself anymore, I'm tired of hoping. If I were sure that something bad had happened to

Gastone...many times I stare at the lake, today it's completely hidden by the fog that's rising slowly and it looks like a big cloud, it wouldn't take much to just jump in and disappear - at least everything would be all over!

January 17, 1944
Last night we had a show - the refugees acted out a variety show and we all had a good time mimicking our daily lives with the best of the modern times. Eva Brown danced, she's very good, very limber, another sang slavic nostalgic songs. We spent an evening different from the others, the commander and director were also present so we sent them the message through our frolicking that peeling potatoes was terribly boring and that the food needed much improvement. They laughed, let's see if we can get some results. My dear Gastone, you should see my hands! There are some people who take advantage of us and boss us around unjustly. The cook is not as bad as he wants to be. The chores are tough, but it keeps me busy and by and by I can get something extra which I can happily share with Mamma and Emma. As usual, there is someone who out of envy wants to take my place, but even if my ten day shift is over they reassigned me to the same job since i had a lot of practice. Who knows, maybe one day this experience will come in handy. Yesterday we were allowed to walk outside our enclosure, but accompanied by three soldiers - what a sensation! We reached a beautiful meadow through the woods, from which we could see two small houses on top of a mountain - the border with Italy - I calculated the time it would take me to get up there and if I could succeed -- but it's useless, it's better to let it be!

Scarlet fever is still rampant and the quarantine is still on. I can't wait to see and hug my people. I received a letter from Aldo Liscia, and he's worried about his family. I asked him if he could find me a job to work as an au pair girl for some family, just to get out of here - but then what? I'd probably wind up in a worse situation. Now I'm sleeping in the "ciquettaio" everybody has a straw sack which I prefer to the hard mattress on the floor. I'm used to it and if it weren't for the horrible snoring of the person next to me, I would sleep really well - but I'll get used to that also. Tonight I feel very strange, I ache all over and have a very bad headache and sore throat. I didn't feel like going in the kitchen; today they took away six other cases. It was pitiful hearing the screaming for being separated from screaming mothers. Poor little ones, they are of all ages, but I feel more sorry for the smaller ones.

January 18, 1944
I'm in a hospital in Lugano with scarlet fever - temperature over 104 -I can't write.

January 25, 1944
One week has gone by and I still have five more to spend in this hospital - but at least I feel better, but I'll start from the

beginning; on the 18th morning I felt very ill and when the doctor saw me she stated that I had scarlet fever even without examining me. She called the ambulance and I could feel my temperature rising, I have terrible chills and I can't be seen by my mother and sister. They put me in a tiny room where there are a lot of cribs piled up, I don't even have room to lie on the floor and I can't stand up. Finally, the ambulance arrives and they take me out on a stretcher. Out of curiosity they were all outside to see me off and among them I see the dear faces of Mamma and Emma who through a good samaritan tried to get me a few necessary things. My heart was breaking at the thought of leaving them behind in that horrible place between the crazy cook and all the diseases going around; besides scarlet fever, chicken pox, scurvy, erysipelas, mumps, and pneumonia, there were also lice that were running rampant. Where I am now it's heavenly! I am able to write today because up to now my temperature had been between 104 and 100 - today it settled at 99!

When I arrived they put me in a large room in a basement. I was assigned to a real bed with clean white sheets. I kept saying, "Oh, what beautiful white sheets!"The nurses looked at each other and thought I was delirious. During the night I got worse and they put me in a small private room so I could be more tranquil. My face was swollen and red as well as my mouth and eyes - I couldn't open them for two days and then with the application of compresses, little by little they went back to normal. I started to peel completely - my face was a red mask and if I looked in the mirror I got frightened. I think I was the only case like that - I looked like somebody punched me. And what a sore throat! It felt like I had swallowed a handful of pins. I also suffered from insomnia and the nurse gave me a suppository of aspirin. It was the first time I had used a suppository and since the nurse said to me "Here, look what a nice piece of candy", I didn't understand right away and I told her that I couldn't swallow a thing - and she started to laugh. To think that I had refused real gourmet food, but the only thing I could swallow was coffee or tea by the teaspoon. Now my fever is back to 100. They brought me some real whipped cream for nourishment, but I couldn't touch it. I forced a little down the throat - what I'm really enjoying is the sweet sensation of lying on white sheets on top of a soft mattress and using porcelain china. I had forgotten all these little luxuries. Besides all this they treat us with kindness, I'm back to civilization. We also have hot and cold water in the bathrooms. When I arrived, there were to other mates from camp who welcomed me with joy. Now there are another four. They were happy to hear of the new landing ashore of the allies - they're approaching Rome! Gastone, you certainly have no idea where I am, but believe me now that I don't have those terrible pains, I'm enjoying my stay here and I don't know how I'll get used to that life of camp again. I'm worried about Mamma and Emma, poor dears, if they could only have a bed like this. We're not allowed to write to anyone, but one of the nurses, who's a real sweetheart, sneaks out a note or two for us.

My dear beautiful Mamma you have so many worries and you spend endless hours peeling potatoes: here we even have a library, so between reading, eating, talking, and writing this diary, my time passes rather quickly. When I came they also admitted four year old Giorgio Finzi, whose mother sent me a note asking me to look after him, saying that she was almost glad that I got sick at the same time so I could be near him. So as soon as I was better I asked the nurse to put him in the same room as me. They were happy to oblige since they said he was a pest and didn't want to be taken care of. I pampered and cuddled him so he took his medication from me. He has pitch black eyes and curly black hair. I'm still a little weak and everybody pampers me, they don't want me to get up and they rush to my bedside if I need anything - we help each other out. When I had to apply the compresses to my eyes it was Nadia who helped me for two days, and today that I wasn't hungry she spoon fed me like a little girl. I would be happy if the quarantine was lifted in Rovio and Mamma and Emma could be reunited with Silvia.

January 29, 1944
I haven't had any fever for a couple of days and I have my appetite back, so I'm enjoying myself eating, almost every night there is a good dessert. Wonderful news! Gino, Franca, Silvia, Anna and the two children are here in Lugano at the "Majestic". I know that's a good place to be and I hope they can have the permit to see me even from the window. Oh my God, how I dream of that moment! To see their dear faces, talk to them and see the children. I received their card, but I'm afraid of sending one back for fear of contamination, but maybe a simple card won't be dangerous. Treatment here has deteriorated a little and again I have the sensation of being treated as a refugee. Today with the excuse of disinfection they took all our things and gave us a short stiff gown. We all laughed when we looked at one another. Tomorrow is Nadia's birthday; I want to think of something special to celebrate her, but it's the shift of that old obnoxious one! But just to spite her we'll have chocolate anyway. But every time I eat something special I always think of Mamma and Emma - I'm tormented at the thought that they're still in Rovio with that terrible commander and that awful food. I wish I could send them something good. It's strange, but since I've been in the hospital my fixation with Gastone has diminished and I feel that he is somewhere safe and sound. I imagine him to be here in Switzerland and then I feel better. Anna Koon is getting ready to leave us, she's through with the quarantine. I still have another month. I'm here in complete seclusion, cut out from the rest of the world. I hope that when I leave here they'll send me where all the rest are. And Amedeo who's all alone in Castello! I'm stopping now; I'm tired even if I feel better, I'm still a little weak.

February 17, 1944
The lights are being turned off, but I want to describe my happiness: Mamma and Emma are in Lugano at the "Majestic" with

Gino, Franca, Anna, and Umberto. I'm sorry that Silvia is all alone and Paolo with an earache to boot! Gastone, tonight I really miss you! Tomorrow I'll try to write to you. Good night!

February 18, 1944
It's been a month that I'm in the hospital and time has passed faster than I expected. I haven't written anything because I didn't feel like it. I lost that resignation that I had initially, and I have a stubborn urge to know, to have even a small contact, instead I feel a strange separation - maybe because lately I've been speaking a lot about you, awakening in me all the sweet memories. This is so strong in me now that I can't sleep anymore - and with my eyes wide open I spend my nights in my own private fantasies, rethinking of our past and a beautiful ideal future, but unfortunately, reality is quite different. I'm dreaming of the day when settled in our armchair very content, I'll listen to all the adventures you went through and then I'll tell you mine and we'll spend many happy hours finally together. But will that day ever come? Many days I think positive and that helps me spend my days in a rather tranquil mode, but at other times I have a horrible premonition and I'm afraid that we'll never see the end of this awful war that's keeping us apart and of all the risks you're running - and these thoughts drive me to madness. I'd like to tell you all about me, the people that I'm with, describe them to you, but I'll remember them anyway . Yesterday we had a visit from the husband and child of one of the patients here, Mrs. Varadi, her cries of happiness at seeing them through the window shook me considerably, and I imagined such a meeting happening to us. I don't think I could hold such a great emotion and I would throw myself in your arms (it's better that I don't, otherwise you'd catch my scarlet fever). Now I'll tell you how I spend my days here! There's nine of us in a huge room, four young ladies, two women, and three children. We keep each other company, helping one another in a spirit of camaraderie. We're all very plain people except for Mrs. Joffe - beautiful, young, elegant, she's wearing a beautiful opossum fur and she's strolling in the garden since she's through with her quarantine. She has money and as soon as she's out of here she's free! She's French, I can see only her legs because we're in a basement and looking out we can't see up. Now she bent down and waves at us. Poor woman, her husband was in the military and he was taken by the Germans. Think how sad it will be to start camp life again, but we have to readjust. Up to today we had the radio on and besides the news we are interested in, we listen to music and plays, I often hear our waltz, Blue Danube, that makes me miss you even more. We also have playing cards, so our time passes rather well and we're getting our strength back. I feel funny being taken care of by people and associations that provide for poor refugees, they sent us fruit and they said we'll also get clothes, probably used but clean and in good condition. Mamma, as you know is very reluctant in asking, but after the first impact I learned to do it with much aplomb. How strange are the circumstances now I learned how appreciated were our things that

Mamma donated to many people - the roles are now inverted. I don't know if it's funny or tragic to see so many distinguished people asking for things they want. I'm glad that Mamma and Emma are reunited with the others, so now my only obsession is you, Gastone. During the day there are enough distractions, but all night in the dark the usual question comes to my mind: Where are you? What are you doing? How are you?

February 22, 1944
Nadia is leaving the hospital. I'm sorry to see her go, she's very pleasant and we had become good friends and with Mrs. Sacerdoti we had a close bond with many pleasant hours together. After a month of togetherness where we told each other all our thoughts and experiences and we understood one another, now I wonder if we will ever see her again. Maybe one day in Italy, in happier times and we'll recall this period we spent so intimately together.

March 5, 1944 I'm at the Grand Hotel Majestic in Lugano! It's a magnificent hotel by the lake with a marvelous view. They took all the furnishings out in order to make it into a camp for refugees. But I have to go back a few days since I couldn't write before. My diary was with the rest of my stuff to be disinfected. February 23rd was the greatest of days! I received a letter from Gastone! It was dated December 23 1943. I was in bed being examined by the doctor when they brought me a letter from my family, but as soon as I read the first few lines I jumped up shouting hooray, hooray. I thought I would go crazy from joy. I started to dance on the bed waving the letter and shouting "News from Gastone!" Everyone jumped out of their beds and came into mine ignoring the doctor completely, who stupefied really thought we had gone mad. I was so confused that I couldn't even read, but then when I got back my cool, I read those few lines over and over again, to me they meant the whole world. The news was old to me and the handwriting wasn't his, but I'm as happy. He's still near Norcia, the letter came from Teramo, but it's not clear whether he's still there or not. What matters is that he received my letter and that he knows I'm safe and that he is not running any risks to come looking for me. My love, how I feel so close to you! You ask me if it's possible for you to join me, of course, but how can I explain it to you - I think now the risk is too great - I wish it with all my heart, but I prefer that you stay hidden away. I try to imagine what your life is like, but I don't think you can come close to imagine what mine is like. My roommates even wrote a poem about our situation; I've talked about you so much to all of them that they want to meet you and i had to promise them that once I'm in Italy you'll have to meet them. They like you so much that I'm almost jealous. Everyone has been very affectionate with me and I'm very much moved by their feelings, they plotted with the nurse to keep me here a little longer, in fact I left on March 2nd. The nurse, Maria, took down some information about me and is going to try to get me out of the camp and let me work there with her. I would like that! I got the permit to leave so suddenly that I didn't have much time to get

ready - I had to have the disinfectant bath and enough time for their traditional farewell. I had a triumphant exit amidst hugs and promises to see one another again. I became very friendly with Matilde Rietti, Nadia who was very pleasant was noisy and immature, whereas Matilde was serious and quiet, but profound and I'm happy because I'll see her at the Majestic where she has a younger sister, Renata, and her mother. She told me of horrendous escapes and that they had to leave her father in a clinic because he was seriously ill with a tumor. They day I left they brought me a cup of cream and from the community I was sent a package of simple, but useful things and new besides. I'm happy and I can't wait to see my family who is waiting very impatiently to see me. So I finally left the hospital accompanied by an armed soldier and we walked for a long time very briskly - we arrived in this big magnificent hotel. The first one to see me was Anna and then one by one all of them, Mamma, my brothers, Emma, Franca, and Umberto. What a scene! I couldn't contain myself from the joy and we couldn't stop talking telling one another all our adventures from the last time we saw each other. To think how we left Gino the last time at the station in Florence with that German on his back! And now he's here a little overweight with a waiter's apron very busy at his job. As usual he takes everything much at heart. They told me how after so many escapades, after having been notified by Anna Vigna, they were able to follow our same route. During a train ride from Varese they warned Umberto (4 yrs. old) not to call Gino daddy since he had the false id with a different name. The child obeyed and after a few days that they had been in Switzerland he whispered if it was okay now to call him daddy and he burst out crying when he was reassured that the bad people were gone. I was sorry not to see Silvia and Paolo, who's in the hospital with a bad case of ear ache and he's in much pain. And Silvia is there trying to free herself. Fortunately she had the good news, she was able to talk to Elio in Budapest who knows that everyone is safe here, but he's in a serious situation; pointed out by the Germans.

The first night I was here I was much confused not being accustomed to so much noise and so many people, but I'm still a little weak and the long walk tired me. The camp here is mixed, there are a lot like me and most families are together. I had so much to tell that I couldn't eat, also because the food was too heavy. I have to get used to it all over again. Giorgo's mom was very grateful of how I helped the child during his illness. A Swiss lady asked me if I'd go to her as a governess for her 2 year old child. This way I could stay in Lugano, I know that they'll separate us to send us to a work camp.

Since I've had news from you, dear Gastone, my brain has been working overtime to find a way to communicate with you without getting you in trouble, I hope I can have further news, I live only for that. How awful to sleep without sheets again. However they gave me a real bed for now since I'm still convalescing, and I'm sleeping in a beautiful room with Anna (she's on a sac though). I

have running cold water, and that's something! Mamma and Emma have also another beautiful room with a small balcony with a stupendous view of the lake. They also have a private bath, armoire and 2 real beds. I'm happy for them. Nothing compared to Rovio! How I would love to have you here with me Gastone, it would be heaven on earth! I still have some aches and pains here and there so I've been exempted from my chores. This way I can write. You should see what a beautiful park, there's even a swimming pool and greenhouses and woods, enchanting, and what a mild climate and spring sun! There are many terraces and a large ballroom with a beautiful grand piano and surrounded by glass doors. The other night Gino played by the light of the moon that actually reflected on the lake and radiated through the room. He was playing Beethoven's "Clair de Lune", very appropriate! I had a sweet tenderness sweep over me; when I take my solitary walks and I imagine you're beside me in this strange dream - like life. Now that my family is reunited, my thoughts of you are more intense and I feel inside of me a sweet contentment that our love is as solid, pure and beautiful as ever. We have never been apart for such a long time. It's the proof that our love is becoming stronger and more beautiful. Last night was Saturday and I had the great joy of being able to participate at the service that they hold every week. You can't imagine how moved I was, it was like the old days at the temple, I seemed to notice you among the men, with your brown hat smiling at me during the benediction, and big tears started to fall, but I think they were happy tears. I felt this great faith take over me making me even more proud and joyful to belong to this religion of which you are also a member. I was the only member of my family on Friday night and that made me a little sad, but Saturday morning Amedeo was there, he gave me a big hug on your behalf and I was very grateful for that. I'm so sorry what Anna did, she can't appreciate this, and she'll feel strange among us...maybe she'll find comfort in her new religion.

You can't imagine how generous this community is! It had a strange effect on me. The fact that mamma was happy to accept the 10 Francs (before they were 6) monthly allowance, among all our family members, 10 each, it was quite a sum. But it also pained me, besides the pleasure it gave me to see the transformation in her. Franca is also like Anna, and I feel sorry for Gino who's torn between the devil and the deep blue sea. He was picked to be the head of the kitchen crew, and all the young girls flutter around and Franca is rather jealous of this (it's somewhat funny, remember in Guardistallo?)

The 9th is Purim and we'll all celebrate and Gino will play. Gastone, why aren't you here? You know that you could have applied to be transferred here. You'd be so proud of my being so Jewish and so would papa. It's a dream from Utopia, but who knows in a month or so I'll be able to be in your arms. Here or in Italy, dear God listen to me!! Last night it was Purim and we organized a little party, first we sang the Ticva (I wrote down the words and I learned them by heart), then they played and danced and at the end

we girls performed like in Rovio, improvising a stage with curtains and blankets. We got everything planned in two days driving Dr. Ronci a little crazy - he had to do the accompaniment on the piano. There were three ladies, a boy, and myself. Yesterday morning I had lost my voice and the doctor gave me an injection. At night the ballroom was all lit up and full of people (about 200 persons including the commander,sargeant, etc.) I got stage fright and I thought I was going to stammer, but instead I was very non chalant with my movements and even my family was surprised because they thought I was rather shy. I certainly changed, I would have loved for you to have seen me, Gastone! First I sing by myself and then in a chorus and a duet, it wasn't a big deal but it was very funny. I'll tell you later. Here everybody likes me and I understand why Anna is a little jealous, I try hard to have her participate, but I see that people don't take to her. I feel bad about this and I really wanted to get along with her, especially here, I thought that she would have changed after all the sad experiences that she had, but that's her personality and I can't do anything about it. I'm glad Paolo is better this way Silvia could be freer. I wrote to you today, Gastone, I wonder when and if you'll receive it. But I want my illusions, even if it's difficult to write everything in metaphor, while I would love just to open up my heart to you, ask you for advice which you alone can give me, express to you all my ideas, my projects and hopes. But alas! As long as you are safe and well, I wish I could have more recent news from you!

March 12, 1944
Gastone, Gastone, why aren't you here to protect me or to scold me if you don't approve of my actions. I'm looking at your photographs staring at me with different expressions as if to reprimand me in one, forgive me in another, and another smiling at me and encouraging me to go on. The one I prefer is the one that we're both very close and you're holding me so tight as if I was going to get away. But don't worry my dear, your Pusse belongs to you completely and nobody would dare take advantage of me. You believe me, don't you? Now I'll tell you some good news - The day after tomorrow we can start going out alone for two hours, alone you understand, without the toy soldiers behind? If you were with me you know what we would do? We would go in a good bakery and we would finally enjoy a good cup of coffee and some good pastries the heck with the money, we could do it with a couple of francs, and then arm in arm along the streets of Lugano like real high class people. I would wear the only good dress I have, the pink wool, and the black fur that Silvia gave me, and everybody would think that we were newlyweds. Do you know that the other day for Purim (I shouldn't say this about myself) I was really cute? I had naturally rosy cheeks, maybe for the excitement, and I felt admired. Enough with my being vain, I'm angry with Amedeo that he hasn't mailed the letter. Today I started to work, now I'm cured and I begin my shift in the kitchen, they took my bed away and hello sack!

March 15, 1944
Finally yesterday after being in Switzerland for three months we went out on our own from two to four. We were delirious with joy, very excited at the novelty and it seemed that the people could see from my face that I was a refugee, and I would turn around to see that I wasn't being followed by my "toy soldier" I would look starry eyed at the beautiful things in the store windows, that in normal times in Italy wouldn't have bothered me. When we sat down in the beautiful cafe in the elegant square, I thought I was dreaming when the waiter asked me what I wanted - we refugees being waited on! For many things we needed stamps and we didn't have any, especially for chocolate, it was also cheap, but we can't. The coffee and the pastry were so good! Before we went out we were told like children to behave ourselves. We went walking afterwards down by the lake. How beautiful! I think you've already been here and walked this path and have admired the same view I'm admiring, and I feel particularly close to you at every moment. Just think that now we can go out every week! Next time I'll start getting busy to find a job with a family, I have the address of the one I met in the hospital, maybe she'll help me. Silvia is still worried for Elio who's in great danger and for Paolo who's still not well. Amedeo is always the same, very adaptable, he managed to get some stamps with his resourcefulness and as usual he's breaking a lot of hearts.

March 16, 1944
It was so exciting going out by myself - free! But now it's over! They recalled this benefit without even telling us why. What a shame! But at least we won't be tempted and spend the few francs we have. I spent some time looking out of the balcony at the people hurrying by busy with their everyday life, unawares (as I was in Italy) of all the ruined lives, of all the uncertainty of so many's future, they look at us with compassion at times, but others with hatred and then I become so enraged that I would love to shout my disdain and indignation at them, but I hold everything in and I feel such sadness within myself as I swallow my bitter tears. Strange as it seems, I spent my best time in the hospital, I felt calm and full of hopes, I was looking forward to being with my family and I felt more tranquil for you too, Gastone. Since I've been here I've spent the first few days in euphoria and happiness in being with my family and I had many things to keep me distracted. Now I've plunged into a deep depression that I cannot shake. The sight of so many young people of our age saddens me even more. I see you among them laughing and frolicking, working like them wearing a big white apron or helping me with my chores, then I wouldn't mind being here and I would be happy and cheerful. With you next to me, free or not, it wouldn't matter at all. Leopardi was right in saying that joy is much more brief than sorrow! Your letter, Gastone, that brought me so much joy left me with the desire to find out more about you, and now I want to receive another one that reassures me on your behalf. Amedeo was finally able to mail my letter when we went out. When will you

receive it? When can I have your answer? I remember some verses of Leopardi that I studied in school.

March 16, 1944
They told us of a visit from the high authorities, so we spent hours and hours cleaning thoroughly, some dusted and swept, others shined - everyone joined in, men, women, and children! And today two platoons arrived with forty people - colonel, etc. They admired greatly the beautiful view from the terrace then they asked us a few questions - they visited everywhere and they were satisfied and pleased with the neatness and cleanliness and as a reward they gave us again the permission to go out unescorted, not two but three hours - Hurrah! We're all very happy. Besides we can also go out every day for two hours with the soldier.

March 19, 1944 - Saint Joseph's Day - I went for my usual walk, all in line, to a fair in the next village.As soon as we got to the small square, all my senses came alive at the smell of cakes and sweets. In fact there were many stands full of everything under the sun, all kinds of cakes, dried fruit, different candies, ice cream and much more. Unfortunately we were only allowed to look, and believe me Gastone it was the torment of Tantalus for me. Also because we had eaten only a bowl of soup. What I craved for the most were the long sticks of licorice! Remember? If you had been there I bet you would have gotten them for me. Talking to the Sargeant on the way back I asked him if it was possible to find an occupation with a local family as a governess, he liked me and do you know what he answered? If I would like to work as a salesgirl in one of the biggest bakeries in Lugano. It was my dream as a little girl! Believe me, then and there I was delighted as long as I didn't have to go back to that camp and he promised me a good deal.

March 20, 1944 - The sargeant called me and said that besides the bakery there was a coffee bar and I had to wait on tables with great tips! You can imagine what I felt! He was being very helpful and thought he had found the ideal job for me and would get the work permit for me. He was a good man and I thanked him but I just couldn't and I thought of your words Gastone: poor yes, but save one's dignity. My family was also opposed to the idea, better to do humble chores inside the camp at least it's for ourselves and we're all in the same boat. Yesterday everyone stayed in his own room for the medical examination for lice, the doctor checked our hair and under our arms - luckily, nothing! Then he called us in his office for an additional visit to categorize us for certain types of jobs according to the state of our health. He didn't want to tell me where he placed me.

3/22/44 - Here I am a year older! I didn't even realize that another year has gone by - I hope nobody remembers this day! Instead all my family came up with presents and Amedeo asked permission to take me out and they granted it for tomorrow. Mamma,

who's always so thoughtful, wants to get me something on your behalf. If I think back a year ago! Do you remember! You came over with your mother and Vittorio and we had such a good dinner. You bought me violets, the red silk scarf and the pin that I wear all the time, one of the few things that I have left. Everyone has been very kind and has wished me a happy birthday with much affection, they try to cheer me up but how can I, without you, my love.How I missed you today, but I feel you very close to me and I hear your best wishes for me and that you'll be thinking of me today more than any other day - I'm right aren't I?We ate the usual potatoes, boiled with the skin on and some beets, which were grey instead of red and with so many onions! I assume that if you were here you would eat them without making faces. Today I had another job offer. The sanitary sargeant having noticed how I took care of children, went to Gino and asked him if he thought I'd accept his offer to take care of his two children at his house while his wife was in the hospital. The job would be great, but the idea of being in his house with such a character like him without his wife or a sister, was not very pleasant. I think that even you, Gastone would advise me against it. I feel that there's some danger lurking out there and I feel safe in the camp. Even the head of the camp gave us a present today - we were told that we would be taken to the movies once a week. But I found out that I've been assigned the first category for the chores, when I see Dr. Ronci I'll tell him a thing or two! Anna and Amedeo are also on the first category list, Emma and Gino on the second, Franca on the third, and Mamma nothing. Poor Mamma, she's very upset at the thought that we'll be separated again. I wonder where they'll throw us. I see a nice round face staring at me, it must be the good air, I have two round rosy cheeks even without rouge. I'm so worried about you, Gastone, I hear that in Italy things are not going well, and they're getting even stricter. I'm thinking of Elio who is still in Hungary and with this new German invasion he has to be in greater danger. Poor Silvia, she must be so upset about her poor child - he's running a fever again. Since he's been here he hasn't been well at all. I hope that she can be set free soon so Mamma can join her. And as far as we're concerned, we'll be patient, so our hands will get more chapped and rougher than they already are. As long as it'll soon be over, but it seems that it is starting all over again. Anna gave me her "sciadai" and I'm very pleased to have it, even though I wish I had one you gave me. I hope to receive news from America, we tried to communicate with them, they must be so happy to know that we're here. Gastone, why don't you surprise me on this day?I'd be happy with just one line in your handwriting, unfortunately, I don't have any with me.

March 23, 1944 - Your surprise didn't come! Mamma insists that I buy something; if I could find a ladybug just like the one you gave me, I would really buy it as a follow up of our little token. Since I insisted that they not spend money on flowers, I was very much surprised when I went in the dining room and in my place I found a beautiful white hyacinth plant with a wonderful perfume.

I cheered up immediately, there were also bunches of violets and primroses that my little students and friends picked for me in the garden. I was really touched when they shouted my civil status. It is customary here to announce to everyone one's birthday so there was a general applause from everybody, and blushing I got up to thank everybody. Giorgino wound up the party with a delicious chocolate bar. Even the cook was good because he gave me a double helping of rice cooked in the milk, even you like that, Gastone - and a huge portion of cooked prunes. Mamma then toasted with cider and pastries - finger licking good! As I was walking out of the dining room with my flowers and gifts, the military surrounded me with compliments and ovations and the sargeant told everyone that I was the nicest and most modest girl in the whole camp. I was all red and confused, you should have seen me, Gastone. And so the evening was spent in a more pleasant way than I had expected. Today - free outing for three hours. Now I'll tell you everything. After walking around aimlessly and having bought a grey flannel skirt (I spent my entire allowance), we went to see the DeMartinos. Silvia had given us their address. The husband was Elio's colleague abroad. You have no idea how strange it felt to go into a real house. After more than three months of camp, to sit in a comfortable chair - I thought I was dreaming. The living room was like ours in style, only different color, but the sofa and the chairs were the same. How many memories that I thought forgotten came back. I was so caught up in my thoughts that I let Anna do the talking, and that lady was so kind that she promised that she'd get on my case. She offered us tea in fine china cups (I could hardly steady my hand while holding the cup), a delicious trifle, chocolates and liqueurs, I couldn't believe it. I thought I was going to wake up at any moment. It was funny that thinking that I was the youngest they gave me another piece of dessert - and I even wore my fur to be more elegant!

March 24, 1944
What a melancholy day! It happens that after a day spent exceptionally well, the next is always sad as a reaction, I guess. Last night instead I felt so carefree after having spent those hours in a normal house among civilized and kind people. We left them at around 5:00 P.M. - the time to go back to our prison ... without bars. We ran all the way back like kids who were late for school - Mamma and Emma took the cable car, but Amedeo, Anna, and me, to save money ran all the way and arrived out of breath and late. The guard noted it down on our card so next time as punishment we have one hour less free time. The chaplain arrived today, the same one I met at Rovio and he gave me the address of a lady who's looking for someone to help her around the house. During the summer she would take me with her to her country villa and I would take care of her two children who are now in boarding school. He told me that sh's a very refined and educated lady, the husband is a diplomat - consul in Italy - Well! I'll ask permission to go. This morning with Emma and Amedeo with our special permit we went to see this lady. It was a gorgeous day and we wandered through

all the streets looking for the address. We walked in a cafe and ordered three coffees, but Emma paling asked me how much money I had in my wallet. Among the three of us we had sixty cents. We cancelled the three coffees and just about paid for just two. Poor Amedeo, he said he couldn't drink any anyway because it wasn't good for him. Too bad, we had to give up also buying other things like needles, thread, etc. After asking around we finally found the house which turned out to be near our hotel. Beautiful gardens! We rang and were shown in a stupendous sitting room with a terrace with a view of the lake (Amedeo smiling asked me if I liked it). In comes a young woman, elegant, attractive, and very kind. After we chatted a while we came down to business. She looks at me and smiling she says she could never boss around a young lady like me, that she needed someone who was accustomed to hard work (a cleaning woman in other words). And yet I was dressed very plainly, I had to learn to take care of the few things I had left and to maintain a certain decor. As she says goodbye she tells me that she'll find out among her friends if there's a position open for my requisites. We go back to camp starving! Last night the chaplain gave me an Italian postcard and I wrote to you. He'll mail it for me in Italy. To be closer to you I went to write it in the salon and when Gino came in I asked him to play "Clair de Lune" on the piano. I looked out the balcony from which I enjoyed a dreamlike view: the moon was reflected on the lake together with the lights from the houses and the lamp posts along the lake - and on Mount S. Salvatore in front of me all the lights of the cable cars were forming a long luminous staircase towards the sky. A straight golden staircase only halfway there was a semicircular curve (that's where the cables meet). The mountain was dark so it really looked like a stair suspended in the air!And meanwhile I was listening to the music, our music, that so many times I listened with you (you sitting on the chair and I on the ottoman cuddled up with my head between your knees). I was then so shook up that the tears came down on the postcard - I was taken up by your presence that I could not see or understand anything. With an effort I shook myself and finished writing. I hope you'll get it, and I'll soon receive some good news from you. It seems hard to continue with the usual business around here without knowing what's going to happen to you. There's a young man, Carlo Bonomi, who lights up when he sees me, and he surrounds me with attentions - and I only get angry at this, but I was able to keep the distance. But the other day his mother took very sick - an attack of angina. She was lying there calling her son, it seemed that she was going to die any moment, and if you see her she's a robust lady, the picture of health. Even if Carlo gives himself airs of a man, he's still a child and he burst out crying. I felt so sorry for him and I did my best to comfort him, I almost forced him to get close to his mother who kept on calling him. Finally the ambulance came and took her away. She's better now. From that time Carlo is like stuck to me, I kid him a little, but now I'll just have to tell him to leave me alone. I feel bad to hurt his feelings and he'll take it badly, but that's enough. I wrote too much about him already.

I don't want to give him more importance than he deserves.

March 30, 1944
Today Miss Noemi Amar (secretary of the head of the camp and one who likes me) suggested that I go in a house with her. I would be the governess and she the maid. I already understood that as a refugee I cannot expect a lucrative job and an au pair position cannot be found. They take advantage of you and that's all. I'm fed up with going to people's homes and facing all those questions that Mamma used to place on our servants. Even if with me they're usually very kind. I'm well off here, considering the work is not too hard and I've gotten used to it. We work for ourselves and we sew and mend for the camp for men. I would never have thought of getting so much experience in such a short time. I thought I would grow up in my bell jar, keeping my good impressions of the world and of people, and then get into another bell jar and continue my way of thinking. How can fate change your whole life! What matters is to keep going with my head held high and to be able to face Gastone with all the tranquility of heart so that he can read in my eyes that I never did anything that he would disapprove of, but instead see something that he can be proud of his little Pusse! For Anna everything is so different, we're trying to get her settled in a boarding house or pensione run by nuns, like the one in Florence, since she's not mature enough to be on her own. For a girl like her there are too many dangers out there and you need to be quite a strong individual to overcome the difficulties, and that Anna is not. Last night I got all dolled up for the concert where all the dignitaries were supposed to participate and the ones from "casa d'Italia, but at the last minute they were not given permission, so we enjoyed it by ourselves. Even Gino played and some poems from an unknown author were recited, some funny ones, it was all a parody on facts that occur in our camp, like the loss of a pair of trousers and things like that. We spent a very joyful evening. They discovered the unknown author was my famous brother, Amedeo!

March 31, 1944
I had mentioned at the beginning that when we were on line to get our fingerprints in Bellinzona, there was a newlywed girl that was three months pregnant. Her name was Edith Gremberger. She told me how, after so many dramatic escapes, she and her family, like us, succeeded in getting to Switzerland. They came from Fiume, and she was the only one who was accepted because she was pregnant, and the others had to go back. We became friendly and I tried to comfort her, she was so desperate. Then we got separated, but we kept somewhat in touch. That's how I found out that she's at a clinic and that the baby was stillborn. I was getting ready to send her some baby clothes. Poor girl, I can imagine the great pain she's in. But what a great surprise that during the role call of the newly arrived, I heard the name of her husband, Egon! I went to him and introduced myself and we started to talk about Edith, how I met her, etc. He told us how he and his family were arrested, on

their way back at the Italian border and sent to the prisons of San Vittore in Milan and then put with five hundred others in an armored car on a train destined for Poland. With lots of guts and courage, he threw himself off the train and walked to Switzerland and finally had himself accepted to join his wife. I think that the unfortunate birth of the baby was due to Edith's emotional state at knowing that her husband was free. Egon was a very handsome man just like i imagined him from Edith's description. Now they'll be together and they're still young and have plenty of time to have other children and make up for these tragic times. Soon she'll also join us and we'll pick up our friendship. How strange to see so many new faces! We veterans, we feel like we own this hotel and we almost feel that these new arrivals are intruders, we all know each other well and have established close ties - it's like a big family. I'm sure that with time we'll also bond with them. Not being used to the house rules, they're now creating a lot of confusion. Luckily, there's already four of us in our bedroom, so they won't put anyone else. The bedrooms are so packed they even put couples together. Tomorrow: Movies! Hopefully it won't be a flop! I received a call from that lady and it seems that she found me a job with a family. I don't know what to do because I've adjusted to the idea of being in a work camp. The chaplain also came and gave me a sermon how I should adapt myself to all the different situations and he'll find something right for me. He gave me the addresses of these people who he's sure will love me, but I begged him instead to take care of Anna, and according to him there should be a place with the nuns who take care of children. Tomorrow the Italian general consul is coming to visit us - so big clean up again!

April 1, 1944
I had to give up going to the movies so I could go with Amedeo to Mrs. Fischer who greeted me very kindly and fondly and gave me the address of Mrs. Giannini, whom I proceeded to visit (before I left Mrs. Fischer, she put a chocolate bar in my pocket). She lived on the third floor of a small house, a bourgeoisie lady, kind but not as impressive as Mrs. Fischer. I would had to do everything around the house plus I would have to take care of two children, one five and one three years old. Now she has a German volunteer who's leaving in a month. She would let me know in writing after she consults her husband, she's for it - I'll let her know. Treated as family. Dine with them at the same table. The only inconvenience would be that since they don't have any room I'd have to sleep at her mother's. This bothers me very much - the idea of going out at night and run out first thing in the morning. On our way out we stopped at a doctor's house - one of the chaplain's addresses. The lady doesn't even let us in and tells us that she has already found someone - and Amedeo answers that he's very pleased and we leave laughing heartily at all these snobs. We took refuge at the library where he hopes to become a librarian. He made me copy a terrible poem. I copied it down in shorthand to make it quicker. The title was "Relentless Hate". The poet revenges his unrequited

love by imagining his loved one buried and whose skeleton doesn't reveal any of her former beauty, etc. Beautiful - right? We were almost a half hour late and we even walked fast, but we were lucky to meet the line of our inmates coming back from the movies. This way we joined them thus avoiding the anger of the guard.

April 2, 1944
I'm undecided whether to accept the offer of that lady with the two children - three months in the mountains away from my family, but I just can't see myself as a housekeeper. I've decided to stick it out and try life in a work camp. The chaplain came back again tonight and it seems that he found something for Anna with some nuns in Locarno. She was beaming with joy as she accepted and I hope this will work out for her. I don't know why, but when I saw her so carefree without any thought of leaving her family, I felt a lump in my throat. To think of the way we were raised, the values and traditions set on us by our father and now to see all his children scattered everywhere in such diverse ways from what he had planned for us, and me ... a maid!! No! I couldn't take it any more, I ran into my room and burst into uncontrollable tears - only you, Gastone could have calmed me. Emma is in the infirmary, and when she's sick I really miss her moral support. Amedeo's voice shook me up, as he was calling me for a show that the newcomers were putting on. The consul general was also going to be there. I had forgotten all about it, but I don't really feel like going.

April 4, 1944
So on the evening of April 2nd we had the show and what a pitiful one it was. I took refuge in the infirmary with Emma, who as usual realizing how upset i was convinced me to go to the show and I convinced her to come with me since she was feeling better. We waited for at least one hour, then the play finally got started and it was so boring and we could hardly hear. Luckily they played some good music, but not as good as they usually do. I'm sure the consul was very bored. This morning the camp chief, Mattei, thanked us on behalf of the consul and read to us the provisions of the racial laws of the Badoglio government, abrogation of everything and restitution of all rights, but until the war is over nothing can change, it's only a moral rehabilitation. There were objections and discussions - it sounded as if we were in Parliament electing a new government. Finally we quieted down and we'll see what will happen. I was dreaming of a resolution and reintegration of our rights to happen in a different way! We're very busy with the preparation for Easter, this will be camp "Kosher" for all those who want to observe it and many will come from the other camps. Reservations for the unleavened bread was unanimous except for Anna, Franca, and her child. Mamma wanted to compromise, but it's not fair either a complete Easter for eight days or no bread, we can't mix. Franca would have preferred that Gino stayed with her, but I think they did the right thing. They could be divided during this period. Rabbi Castelbolognesi came to see us to give us a sermon and to teach us how to get organized in the kitchen in

keeping things separate from the others. Gino is very excited and keeps very busy. All the utensils will be kept separate and are arriving from the community: cups, glasses, food, chef, etc.

April 20, 1944
Today I finally found time to write what has been happening these days. I've been and still am very busy - not one moment to be idle. Easter has passed, there was a big to-do in the preparations, but we were satisfied with the results. We had to set up the kitchen down in the laundry room. I can't describe the mass confusion in setting things up and transporting things. Gino was very ingenious, he set up with some boards a conveyor belt for the transportation of the food and utensils - through the windows of the dining room to the laundry in the basement where the kitchen was. This way we didn't have to go up and down the stairs. Oh Gastone, you should have seen how comic everything was, the yelling and screaming up and down - "Ready? ... Pull... come on, the rope is breaking...Help!" and pots and pans, glasses and plates in and out of boxes - big disasters really happened, luckily only at one point and I was there. A big container of water was let go and it wound up on Egon's head - the curses from him and the laughter from us. Luckily it was only dirty water and not boiling hot! As a maitre d Gino placed the tables in the shape of a horseshoe, with beautiful white paper table cloths and vases with flowers (we disrobed the garden). This way it looked like a real hotel dining room and not a cafeteria. Very festive with plates and even glasses. The first night we had everything lit up and at the door we had someone accompany everyone to the assigned seat. Everything was ready on the plates: the "carosced" placed on dessert paper, the salad, the unleavened bread, the matzo soup, and as soon as everyone was seated at the table the seder begins. I was really shocked, nothing about it reminded me of the simple ceremony we used to have at home, oh, our Easter or the one at the Castelli's house! And the dinner at Renzino! How many memories. Here instead it seemed like the voice of the mizzen from the minaret, a very unpleasant monotone, endless and which nobody could understand. Everyone was waiting impatiently to start eating and by and by we all started picking on our food. So when the time came to start our meal we had already finished and started looking at one another like school children who had put one on the teacher. Nothing touching or solemn like I expected. At night, alas, indeterminable piles of dishes to wash, brought back and forth, while outside the gate, people would stop and look at us as if we were from out of space. What we got out of it was a double helping of cheese and apples. It was so funny to see the cooks; Emilio and Guignati looked like two brutes with those filthy overalls, sweaty and busy around the cauldrons, exhausted from the heavy work. When we went back to clean up they either treated us badly or they saved us some delicious morsels. On the whole we didn't mind it too much, one day we turned the hoses on ourselves and got soaking wet laughing all the while. We would end late, ten at night, and then we would sit outside in the garden. For Easter we

had extra lighting and all the lights were reflected on the lake like a dream. We would sing the songs most dear to us and at times nostalgia would take over, moving us to tears. One time we decided to make french fries - what a job for two hundred people! But we really stuffed ourselves - our poor cooks! We also made coffee, baked apples, eggs, everything provided by the community. Some of the meals were not that good, but that was fine, too. Some people exchanged their food with the non kosher ones, and to think of all we went through to keep it separate. I'm wondering how you spent these holidays, my dear Gastone. I hope that at least you had all that is necessary. Remember our famous meal with the goose? All the preparations that we made with so much joy and then... everything went up in smoke for that damned phone call that scared us! The last few days I was upset because Emma is sick again with terrible pains all over her face. It seems to come from the trigeminal nerve; now she seems better, but she was so miserable with pain! Moreover there is some news that has everybody worried. It seems that Elio was captured in Budapest on St. Joseph's Day, together with a group who were followers of Badoglio. I hope it's not true; to this we also have the news that Paolo, who was already in the hospital with measles, has been brought to a clinic to be urgently operated for mastoiditis. I know that it's very painful and I'm sick at the thought. I was really down the dumps that day and I was confiding with Emma, the Sargeant had me called, there were a Mr. & Mrs. Loemer who needed a young lady for their child and help around the house.

April 30, 1944 - I'm so busy all day, that I can't find time to write. So even with Wemers, I decided not to do anything, first of all because they're Germans, and then because from what I understand they expect complete service, I would do it, but at this particular time I hate leaving mamma and Emma. I think I must have given them a strange impression of myself, my eyes were blood shot from crying with my work apron. He seemed very kind, she on the other hand was very snobbish. I chose to spend one week in the infirmary here both for the woman and for the men, they were so happy to have me that they didn't want to leave. During Easter they changed the commander. The first speech that he gave really annoyed us; repeal of free outings, only obligatory walks, discipline etc. But later he became more understanding. Very funny the last inspections that the samaritans and the other VIPs made. The commander was very happy with the morning exercise lessons that Mrs. Gross teaches. Actually they're great exercises that slim you down and limber you up and were done in the salon (one day the commander sneaked in to observe us, at the end of our routines he clapped and told us to repeat them on the day of the inspection). I didn't feel like exhibiting myself and on inspection day I was tutoring a child. They looked at all the books and papers,asked questions and then they read a phrase that I had the child write on purpose "Pierino is dirty because he has no soap" (they had not given us any for sometime). I hope that now they'll give us some. Everybody had to be at their job; who chopped wood, who cleaned and

so on - a big to do and great performance. Then Gallico came, he's the head of our drama group, and tells me to rehearse, we're ready with our lines, scripts in hand and Gallico starts rehearsing love words to me, I got very angry and ran out in the garden. How dare he! From the day before we had been cleaning and shining, me on my hands and knees to oil the samaritan's floor where one irons and sews. I'm glad that the commander was satisfied. However, he has this thing about long walks and if one refuses to go, he has to stay indoors and do heavy work. We came back too hungry and tired. Now he's better, he let's us go out without a soldier, in groups of ten at a time for walks and to the library. I had already been there with Amedeo but I was happy to go back; I consulted the encyclopedia, I read and copied some poems. To get to the library one has to cross a beautiful park with stupendous plants and flowers of all kinds and the lake beating its' waves as if it was our beautiful sea. We passed a cart selling ice cream and with the great heat we felt like buying a small one - but nothing - the soldiers didn't let us. Yesterday instead we planned the ten young people to go to the "Paradise", rightly named, we all covered ourselves with flowers. You should see how our garden is also full of flowers. Lilacs, forget-me-nots, hydrangees, it's a play on colors and what perfume! We refugees take great pride in making it look beautiful and we work very hard at it. Today we went to the theater; "Rossini", a silly Italian movie. The other time we saw "An Impossible Family". It was a good distraction for me. I missed you so much, Gastone, I was thinking of the times we went to the movies together, and then I imagined that you were sitting next to me and at a certain point I found myself squeezing Matilde's arm very tightly. When we came back I sat by myself in the garden reflecting and meditating and as usual I was overtaken by a profound melancholy. Lina, I've been thinking about you, how you must grieve from a similar distance. But my dear we have to be strong. Today again we had new arrivals and I envied those happy people who were reuniting. I keep dreaming day and night of the day that Gastone might arrive here, but by now there are no more illusions. The two Grembergers are here reunited, I'm happy for them. There's also another young couple. They got married so that they could come here together and an engaged couple. All young couples around our age. I share in their happiness and I help them redecorate their room, but how I would like...also... In these days we've had a few government crises, but besides this there's an uncouth communist here who screams and yells with his propaganda and has everybody up in arms, and with their shenanigans he got Mattei fired and also Gino who had become second in command, lost his rank. Everybody was so serious about this whole act that you would think that they were really dealing with a government crises. I also voted of course for Cabibb, he's a fine person. He was elected, and for vice chief, a Mr. Luizzi who recently arrived from Balerno - even the commander interfered. They gave the whole situation too much importance, it bordered the ridiculous. Amedeo, who acts as the newscaster, especially when there's something new, was very witty with his broadcast and wrote with humor: " the news

comes whenever I please and it doesn't count anyway" He also wrote a poem in this regard: "The conspiracy of the lunatics, which without siding with anybody ridiculed everyone" - what a reaction! Shouts and protests from the extreme left - now they've calmed down, but there's still some personal resentments left. Going back to the play, they assigned me a small part as a maid. During rehearsals I was so good and unconstrained that they gave me a better part, that of a "cocotte" Can you see me in that, Gastone? But don't get shocked, the title of the play is "The Well Behaved Cocotte" and it has a moral to it with a happy ending. Amedeo wrote a mystery, a very original play, very much liked and (against his better judgement) they gave me a part in it. There are only two women. As you can see I never thought that I possessed any special aptitudes and now I'm appreciated in many different tasks, even as a dancer! and as a seamstress; every afternoon many ladies come to me and ask my advice on sewing and cutting and I take care of the men who don't have mothers or wives to look after them; I already altered some slacks, jackets, and other small things. Many come to me with sincere liking and I'm very pleased to be needed and learn many things at the same time. I even fixed some dresses for Anna, a coat and a skirt, but now I have also to think of myself since it's getting warm and I have nothing to wear. They gave us some straw so I can learn to make some hats, bags, or belts. The other day this lady called me, she's from Bern and the wife of the chief of police - tall, distinguished, but with an ear trumpet. But we didn't get anywhere because she spoke German. I tried speaking French and we succeeded in understanding one another. She proposed to me to go with her to Bern for a few days as a maid and cook for her son who is a doctor and has a clinic and a small four bedroom house. A lot of freedom and 80 francs a month - a nice sum for me and this sounds very attractive, but the fact that they speak German...NO! Speaking with a lady who has children in Bern and would like to go there, I promised to introduce her so she could have this position. We both got permission to leave and we go where this lady is staying - a very beautiful hotel. More conversation, she would have preferred me but I convinced her that this other lady knows German, and so again I let another opportunity pass me by. To thank me she took me to her sister's who lives in Lugano and she offered me an egg cooked in butter, bread, zwiebach,and oranges. I heard that maybe they're opening up a school to teach reconstruction work for after the war: rebuild dormitories, kitchens, and engage oneself upon one's return to Italy. I'm very much interested and I will look into it. Alas, the news from Silvia is not so good, Paolo is still in the hospital and she found out for certain that Elio has been taken by the Germans together with others. Poor dear Elio, and we thought that of all of us, he was the safest. And Silvia, how painful for her to go through this, I feel so close to her - may God help us. As long as you, Gastone, don't wind up like that. What horror and humiliation! Let's hope that Paolo will get better and they can be free to go to Locarno and we can see one another after so many mishaps. Gastone, do you know that I had dreamt that you arrived

here with your mother? Why isn't it true? What's happening to you? Now that I've given up the idea of settling outside the camp, I'm getting so many offers. I was in the garden with two children and two elderly people stopped to ask me a few things and they proposed that I go with them in Lausanne, for light housework. I would like that and then I could really learn French well and I would be near my cousin, Roberto, but above all I could make some money to help out my family. What irony! Me wind up in Lausanne and you're the one who was supposed to go. I can't decide and I'm regretting that I let the Bern one pass me by (if you were here you would get angry at my simplemindedness). I could have done something for my family and for Elio considering the social status of that gentleman. But it's done and that's all there is to it. Mamma is a little down lately, she has lost weight, she has bronchitis with high fever, but she wasn't taking care of herself and she didn't want to see a doctor. I succeeded in getting her checked up and now she's better. Emma is still subject to those terrible headaches. Alas, there's been an infestation of lice, and those infected with them were sent to Bellinzona to get rid of them. They came back with great turbans on their heads. It certainly isn't pleasant, and I'm terrified of getting them - with this heat and the sacs we sleep on it's really disastrous and also for other bugs, too. For all this I would really like to go with a family where I would have my own room with a real bed with mattress and sheets - eat a little better!...But..yesterday after my walk I had finished my bread ration and went to the kitchen to beg for some pieces of cabbage or a carrot to stop my hunger pangs. I can't wait for the first so I can have my chocolate bar. I have to ask the committee to give me something to wear, it's getting so hot and I have nothing light to put on. Speaking of turbans, I met a very nice person, Mara Coen, she was wearing a turban. She looked really funny and she was a little embarrassed by it. She was with her father, sister, brother, and sister-in-law. She had the treatment done in Bellinzona like everybody else, but she was by herself and very shy. I comforted her and explained the rules of the Majestic which were new to her. She had no mother and she told me that she lived in an insane asylum in Mantova and told me that there were a few crazy people who were really nice and pleasant and she continued to tell me of a few episodes (not dangerous, of course). We agreed on a lot of our ideas, both religious and political. We're the same age and I told her about Gastone. We became very good friends. Tonight we had a very boring lecture on biological methane. The commander encourages us to organize lectures or some courses. A language professor promised us one of his lessons. The day really flies by: wake up at 7, then breakfast, then I clean my room, exercise, I teach, then lunch. After that I have my chores, I even take language lessons, then dinner. Sometimes I take a nap, at other times there's rehearsal for some play. We also have to wash, iron, mend, and if we have some free time here and there I read and write this diary. This kind of active life is fine with me and I think if you were here I would be perfectly happy.

May 6, 1944
I'm faced with another decision. I have the opportunity to be a maid in a hotel. That's something I never thought of doing and it somewhat intrigues me to change my life so radically. They're asking for a certain number of young ladies for the grand hotels during the summer season - May 20th to August 20th. Fixed salary sixty francs plus a percentage, plus tips (which are quite a bit)> I would make a lot and I could help Silvia who's about to be set free and she'll need a lot of help for her child who just left the hospital. He's still a little weak, but he'll be alright with his mommy and they'll be going to Locarno. I would also be helping Mamma and Silvia who need to eat better, lighter and healthier. And then I would be able to save something so that on my return to Italy I won't be penniless. It's only temporary, even some princesses had to do this and worse. It's a new parenthesis on this muddled life that we're leading. I'm arguing constantly with Mamma and Emma who are dead against the idea and their trump card is that you certainly would not approve. They don't think that it's a dignified job! The world has changed so much and I don't think they're up to date on their thinking. I spent the whole night deciding what to do and maybe it's true that you would not like it. But you know me well, by now I know how to handle myself in all situations. I've been through so much in these past months that I've grown up in a hurry, and besides the dangers they fear could happen anywhere. I feel that I've remained the same with my ideas, basically moral, and it's certainly not this experience that will change them. I would only have to do the service in the dining room at the tables, I would be treated well, have my own bed, lots of free hours, and I could meet influential people who could help me later on. Silvia agrees with me and says that if she didn't have Paolo she would do it and wrote saying that I shouldn't have given up the position in Bern. But enough with all these stories, I worry too much instead of taking it easy. Even here in Lugano I had another offer, taking care of four children and everything would be fine except that they're not orthodox Jews and I don't think that I would get along: on Saturday one can't work, shop, nor write, or use gas or electricity, and God forbid you should mix meat with dairy and mix utensils and everything must be kept separated even when cleaning up. I'm reminded of them with the Della Torre, but they are worse. I don't think I could stand it. Gastone, please inspire me, my mind is so muddled with ideas I don't know what to do. I've been sewing a lot and I'm doing well. I learned to change the collars and cuffs of a man's shirt. Everybody calls on me and they want me and Matilde tells me that they call me the "Angel of the Majestic". It sounds a little exaggerated, but I notice that they're all fond of me, the refugees, samaritans children, and mother's alike. I'm sure if I needed their help they would gladly oblige. Some time ago, while Emma was still in the infirmary, a sickly lady came by with two small children, one still nursing and the other with a little bronchitis. I walked in the room to see such a mess, the husband didn't know what to do next, They had just arrived from Balerna,

everything was dirty and messy. Feeling sorry for them I started to clean up and to get something to eat for the little girl and I started to take care of them; she got very attached to me and tells me that her name is "Orefice" and when she finds out that my name is Ottolenghi then she asks if I'm Gastone's fiance. You can imagine how excited I got, we started to talk and I find out that she knows your mother, your father, and the Nahons. She's from Milan, but she's not a relative; the husband is a little obnoxious, but she and the little brother are nice, the little girls are very cute, her maiden name was Soria. We talk about old times in Livorno and Pancaldi, I got homesick! I babysit for her every now and then and she's very grateful. They sent the husband to a work camp and soon also the brother will go. (I fixed his slacks). I wait for the mail with great anxiety and I'm disappointed every time. Yesterday I was with Edith and she was with a pleasant young couple from Pisano. They invited me to join them for a walk, but I was in a very dark mood and I wasn't up to it. Edith understood and she gave me a big hug. Just think how nice it would be if you were here with us, we could have found a place where we could work together and the world would be all ours.

May 25, 1944
It's been twenty days that I haven't been able to write one line, but that doesn't mean that I haven't been thinking of you, Gastone, and it gets worse as time goes by, and I get more nostalgic. It's like an illness that I can't cure. There are moments when I laugh and kid around and try to react, but these moments are becoming rarer and rarer, sadness gets the best of me worse than ever, every thing, every word, and every event reminds me of things that have happened with you. Notwithstanding, time is flying and I try to keep as active as possible. The family is starting to break up again, they sent Emma who hasn't been well, to Aqua Rossa, a place for cures. It's been a long time that Emma has been exhausted with her usual ailments and finally we had an army doctor look at her and he sent her away to get well. This is great for her and I hope with good food and a comfortable bed she'll recuperate her strength. Even if I'm the stronger, I still feel weak at times from the lack of fats and vitamins in my diet. Also Franca, close to giving birth, has to go to Mendrisio, and Umbertino will be left behind in my care. I cringe at the thought of my being sent to a work camp; then what will happen to Mamma and the child? I feel very empty without Emma even if I'm used to being on my own now, her support and advices are very precious to me. Mamma means a lot to me also, but sometimes she's so far removed from practicality and the problems that have to be solved. I hope that Anna will soon be set free. Now I must confess something very strange that happened to me and which you probably would not approve of, Gastone. There was a bunch of us in Amedeo's room to rehearse a play which he had written. At a certain point we started to discuss spiritism (which I don't believe in and am very much against) and seances, etc. Among our group there was a medium, A Yugoslav who's been trying to convince me and tries very hard to

hypnotize me, but he says I'm too strong willed. I tried it on Anna and then we decided to have a seance in the dark with a four legged table (there are none with two and Amedeo was lucky to find one with four) At a certain point the table began to move and wave without any apparent tricks and I was very affected by this. Even if I was disgusted by the whole thing, I asked the spirit things about you and I was terrified lest he told me some bad news, even if one doesn't believe it's still pretty bad. Fortunately he told me that you were well and that you were in Abruzzo. I didn't want to continue because it came out that the spirit was that of our dear cousin, Clelia, who died recently in Rome in a bombing, and the sisters were recently deported. I asked about her sisters, she told me the worst had happened; poor unfortunate girls - the war should end in four months -let's hope! It's already been five that we're in Switzerland. After this time I didn't want to have any part in it anymore. Two days ago I went with Anna around the committees to see if I could find some summer clothes. The people in the Jewish committee were very kind and gave me a certificate to purchase medicines for Emma, more than twenty francs which we didn't have. We also got brand new clothes, even if not so pretty. Anna naturally didn't have any rights so we went to the Caritas where we had to wait a good while and were rather rude. We got something from the red cross, but what a feeling to go through these dirty and old rags. I needed a "package" but since there were men around I was embarrassed, so I did without. There's a very kind lady with us, she's French and she has a firm which manufactures "packages", and since I did some favors for her she promised me that she'd make me one. I'm a little embarrassed. I went to see that Jewish lady, Mrs. Berlinger, she's so kind that she didn't want to let go of me and she wanted to start the papers right away for my freedom, this way I could take care of her children. I feel bad but I have too many doubts, she has a fabric shop that reminds me of the one in Piazza Cavallotti, maybe a little better but the same mentality.

Finally last week I had the joy of seeing Silvia and Paolo! Silvia has lost a lot of weight but she's well and even Paolo, after all he's been through, I thought he'd be worse; he's still very active. Silvia advised me against going with a Jewish family for the fear of a German invasion. She's always been catastrophic. To think that I left her and her child alone that famous night that you Gastone came to pick me up to take me to Switzerland. So many things have happened since then! She came and left right away. She's staying at a protestant minister's house and Paolo hit the frame of the bed and chipped two teeth. Mamma left for Locarno, she obtained a three day leave to see Silvia. She was so happy to be free. Poor mamma, she's so down, she needs another kind of life but what can we do! I don't know how to disengage myself from that Jewish lady, she's so good, she came to see me and brought me some fruit, white rolls, delicious chocolate and pastries; but we'll see! Now I have another idea- Mamma told me of another camp in Freeburg, for girls interested in language, gymnastics and home

economics. I wonder if they would take me. I applied with her, I'll keep my fingers crossed, I would be so happy and there's also a chance of going to the University. I have to be careful because it's mostly frequented by many foreigners who are accustomed to a lot of freedom. I'm sorry that they sent Matilde Rietti to a work camp in Brissago, I had gotten so close to her. I just heard of the death of her father - he had been left behind in a hospital, it was a blessing for him - he was in a lot of pain. Her mother is here and I promised that I would take care of her. They're such dear people that it's wonderful to do some good for them, sooner or later what good we do falls back on us even if indirectly - some good will or a kind word at the right time is better than a gift. Matilde's mother taught me how to do netting. I bought the necessary equipment, but she practically did it all herself. Now I have a brand new bag that reminds me of the blue one you gave me. I sewed a dress for Mrs. Kramkamer, a little hurried because she had to go to the hospital with her beautiful child who had been sick and I had taken care of him several times. I didn't want to take any money for it and on his way back from the hospital, her husband brought me a leather lace, mine got broken, and some good white rolls. Then there's Spigel, everybody avoids her because she's such a pain. I try to be patient with her and I did some work for her which resulted very bountiful into a loaf of bread (which I divided among my numerous tribe). Many call on me for jobs that I'm not too good at , but everybody is convinced that I succeed at everything. Mara is in constant ecstatic admiration of everything I do . She's so good and i really hope I can go to Freeburg with her, but I would like to see my family settled first. There have been a lot of departures these days. We're all a little concerned because we're not aware of the type of life that awaits us. From what we hear the work camps are not so bad and the food is better. But life here is fine. We're the seniors and they call us the "Senate" because we inform the new arrivals of the rules and regulations of the place. There's been a new election and the scepter is now in the hands of Mr. Ancona - our pal! Among the new arrivals there's a Professor Fubini with whom Silvia discussed her thesis in Florence. Since Emma left, she used to take care of the school, he's now in charge of it and I teach some subjects and I have his son as a student. The food has deteriorated lately, and since we complained, they fired the cook. We'll see if there's any improvement, I can't stand those potatoes anymore, but when you're hungry and there's nothing else available...they're more than welcome. Yesterday we had chocolate! Amedeo wrote some ditties on the event and that night I sang them after the play. Even Edith has left and was separated from her husband. But he's not too far away and they'll be able to see one another often. She's also in Brissago. So many dear friends have left! There's a complete new atmosphere. Even the Vita Finzi have left - the men went someplace to chop wood and the like. This is what I've been told. (see Tora -Collesalvetti). I hope to see them all on our way back home. I wonder how this such longed for return will happen? A lecturer came to talk to us on the post-war organization. It's something

that interests me very much, to be able to participate directly in the organization for the reconstruction of our poor, tormented country. And I would be among the first ones to leave after the war. I wish they would hurry up in their organization, before they send me away from here , and God knows where they'll send me - I'll lose all my contacts. The spirit said that I'll be transferred soon.

June 4, 1944
It's June! I'm here next to the pool that they filled with water and my thoughts go to our beautiful sea - to Pancaldi - our baths. Maybe they'll let us swim and I'm making a bathing suit for myself with some fabric. Right now however, I wouldn't put a bathing suit on all alone - there are too many soldiers around. You should see how beautiful it is here, Gastone, full of roses and different flowers. The fences are over-filled with wisteria - what a perfume! Just as you used to like it, Gastone! Since I've been here I've been able to follow the transformation of the garden - from bare to green to flower filled. How you would enjoy this if you were here to share the beauty of nature in its changing seasons. I'm not always pleased in this change. I feel inside me a great weight and an emptiness at the same time and I can't seem to react in any way. A few young couples have arrived; some of the women pregnant. I just found out that little Sergio Segre died! How is it possible a 10 month beautiful baby, chubby and rosy - you could eat him up with kisses - I held him so many times and he would just smile and laugh. He had been sent with his mother in a home and they had to weane him and within a short time he got weaker and weaker and died suddenly. I was really shocked at the news, I can still see him in his high chair or on the floor clapping away his hands. Everybody was really shook up and it doesn't seem to be the first baby. Mrs. Orefici's baby seems to be in the same condition wasting away rather seriously. Franca left, she's close to giving birth and very upset that she had to leave her child especially after such news. Unfortunately, after she left, Umbertino caught the flu and as promised, I did not budge from his bedside. He was like my own child, I did not even go down to eat and with this heat it was hard not even to get some fresh air. Today he's finally feeling better and he went with Gino to see his mom. Good news from Emma - she's improving. A few days ago we saw "The Merry Widow" in French. I was happy to have been able to understand it all and I even translated to the others that didn't know the language. I just got the forms to fill out for the after war course but the commander is not favorable and he forbade me to fill it out. I don't think this is fair, because I know people in other camps have done it. I'm very embarrassed with regards to Mrs. Berlinger, she's such a dear, and wants to do everything to get me my freedom so I can stay with her. I tried staying with her for a few days, but I'm not convinced for the kosher business, and besides after the evening chores I have to help her husband with the daily accounts. Even Emma encourages me to be patient and stay on camp. They called me in the orderly room to sign and when I

refused both Mr. Werner and Mr. Puadri got very upset and threatened to have me sent to a hard work camp. I wrote to that lady and it will be very painful but they can't force me against my will.

June 5, 1944 - Hurrah! They've taken Rome! Last night this happy news made us drunk with joy, we were euphoric with glee and we all started to sing, young and old, and of course Mamma joined us with her favorite patriotic hymns. And how did you receive this news Gastone? I really feel now that the end is getting near, but we still need a lot more patience. Yesterday was so hot that they inaugurated the swimming pool. Anna was one of the first, and since she didn't have a bathing suit she went in with her clothes on. Umbertino came back and he was running a fever again. So today I was stuck in his room except for two hours of tutoring the Fubini children, he asked me to help prepare them for the entrance examination which they'll take in ten days. I really want them to do well! Tonight I'm really exhausted, I noticed some white strands of hair, it must be my worries, but I feel that my youth is slipping away, the best part of me is leaving, I'm so fed up, so tired, so full of responsibilities. I take it out on everybody and I take everything so seriously. I wish I were like Anna, she doesn't care about anybody or anything, she just thinks about herself and takes advantage of what she can. At times she even puts on the jewelry that Mamma divided among us in case of emergency. Goodbye for today - I can't stand it anymore!

June 14, 1944 - The English are advancing, I heard they're near Terni, I'm following all these important events on the map and I'm wondering if you, Gastone, are already in the free zone, are you with them? Many times I think that I've made a very big mistake to come here because that day in Florence when I saw your father I did not tell him in not so many words that I wanted to go with him to be near you. Probably he would have said no, like he didn't want Elsa, he probably would not have taken me either. How much longer is it going to last? I wish I could be with you in these exciting times to share together the advance of the allies. But where are you? Teramo or Norcia? I don't know what to think, where you've gone. I wrote that to you. We keep getting more refugees and even German soldiers who flee from Italy. They've extended our restrictions, for fear of the crossing of the frontier. No more leaves and no more free walks. Always new departures and new arrivals. We're the only survivors of the old circle, but I fear or hope not for long. Umberto is still not well, but I'm doing my best and Franca should be happy. I was able to go out and succeeded in finding for him some pastina, butter, eggs, rice, white rolls, oil, etc. so that for a while I'll be able to feed him well. I even got a hot plate. I'm fed up though with some of the women who always have something to say on the matter. Since I've sewn my bathing suit, they've prohibited swimming - only men two times a week. Patience! Today my three pupils started their exams, I hope they'll do me honor! Emma writes that she's

improving, but i can read between the lines that she's not doing too well and Anna is impatiently waiting for her freedom. As usual my days are very tightly packed with all the various activities. The other day i went out by myself strolling along the streets of Lugano and I felt so happy and I was trying to realize that it was me - Lea Ottolenghi in Switzerland - that I was doing whatever I wanted to. It didn't seem possible!

June 16, 1944
Hurray! Both Terramo and Terni are free! So I'm sure, my dear Gastone that your certainly free and that you're marching triumphantly with the English. And me? I'm helpless I can't join you. A passive spectator to all these great events. I enjoy hearing about them on the radio - the triumphal advance of our men and the precipitous escapes of the Germans. How sad not to be with you. But I feel that even as the beginning of the end has started we still have a long way to go before i could be in your arms again. Luckily I'm so busy, but I'm becoming more impatient, everything bothers me! And we go on. Today being Anna's birthday I went out with her and Mamma and ate some good sweets and coffee. But we were not as gay as we were on our first outings. Mrs. DeMartino is a real treasure, so good she had the consulate send me a new dress and it fits me perfectly. It has a green skirt and a knitted white top. I wish you could see me. But I always wear an apron to save the few dresses I have so when I go out I can look good.

I took my pupils to the "Casa Italiana" for their fifth grade exams. As soon as we walked in the other children stared at us with a curious look. As refugees we are considered something out of the ordinary. The teachers came over to me treating me as one of their own and told me to come back to pick up the children in about three hours. What should I do with this unexpected free time? After a few errands I took a walk in the park by the lake. What a delightful time I had! Under the gigantic trees I could feel the welcoming breeze from the lake and the inebriating perfume of the flowers overwhelming me. This is a place that I would like to come back with you. In a far fetched way it reminds me in certain points of Parterre and that famous day when sitting on a bench we exchanged those serious words. After a long walk I sat on a bench to admire the beautiful view of Mt. San Salvatore reflected on the lake and the bent tree branches were giving a lustrous green reflection and I started to dream and... eat from a bag of ripe cherries that I had bought after some serious consideration on where to spend my last thirty cents. All of a sudden the loud noise of plane engines startled me back to reality to the thought of the war that was going on in such a nearby place and of you in danger, God knows where. I started to walk again very haphazardly, there were some older couples here and there and after having crossed a bridge I found myself with my feet almost in water in a meadow where some young people were fishing in a very funny way. It was almost time to go back to my prison without bars. It was

the first time that I was able to wander without an aim - usually I have to run to do my errands. I even stopped at the Berlinger shop to say hello. Mrs. Berlinger was not there. I stood looking at some beautiful fabric thinking what a pretty outfit I could make out of it in two different shades adding a piece that I had from camp. The husband walked in and asked me how much I needed. I was embarrassed also because I didn't have any money, but he insisted on giving it to me as a present. I was taken aback since I had decided not to go to them, I feel bad, they're so very kind with me.

June 18, 1944
It's real funny to see happy faces on the Majestic refugees - and all because of a great meal. It seemed like a dream! The previous chef was fired and another one took his place who's an absolute angel. Today he prepared some delicious savory meat croquettes and for supper some good barley with an excellent condiment and a pudding so delicious and plentiful that everyone licked their fingers. They brought him triumphantly into the dining room from the kitchen. I don't think he would have had such applause had he been a great general. He was touched by our sincere outbursts, at times you don't need much to make one happy. But he's an extraordinary man. Today I went in the kitchen to ask if I could cook something for the child and he asked about his health and gave me some pasta and chocolate for Umberto and suggested that he take him home with him so he could feed him better. I succeeded in obtaining some other goodies. Whenever I obtain special things or better treatments from the various organizations I return triumphant, but then I get depressed because a sense of humiliation takes over me. But today I want to be cheerful, let's not think about sad things. I watched a little scene in Livornese dialect. I thought we were in Piazza Cavallotti. The Dello Strologo and the Valles have arrived recently and it's funny to listen to their colorful speech in this place, expressions and inflections that I had not heard for such a long time. Of course they know you and that I'm engaged to you. I'm very happy my pupils did me honor, they all passed! I would like to go swimming in the pool, but we can't. Anna goes anyway, I made her a beautiful suit and she looks good in it. Gastone, today I feel very optimistic. I feel that soon it will be all over. But how will I find you right away? I will try everything. My love, will I ever live to see that day? It will be too much - I will burst with joy, but we deserve it after so much anguish, right?

June 24, 1944
Great event! Franca had a baby girl and Gino is beside himself! They didn't even give him leave to go and see her because they've increased our restrictions and we can't leave the city. Gino, very impatient, broke the rules and went to Mendrisio to see Franca. The baby is beautiful, fat and brunette. Everything went well and now I'm an aunt for the seventh time (I wonder if in America they'll make me an aunt for the eighth time). To think how

everything would have been different in one's home, everyone would have been so excited, here instead we're divided in categories according to age and state of health - like numbers. One gets used to a different mentality in accordance with the circumstances. The day before yesterday we organized a trip to Mt. San Salvatore. I took a half day off and went with Mamma and fifty other people. The commander was also with us, and he was very kind. The walk to the cable way was rather long and hot. Mamma slowed down and we were a little behind all the others. When we got there the cable had left without us. We waited for the next one, but they expected us to pay for the ticket when we had already paid our franc. But at the end they let us go through. Little by little the car gained speed and at the end it was so steep that the view was like seeing it from a plane: the lake, the houses, and the mountains all in perspective like you see in aerial views in postcards. When we got to the top we walked to the top of the mountain and I was really stunned by the view so new to my eyes. I could admire the different ramifications of the lake and surrounding mountains. They all looked like plastic miniatures, the lake was so still,but the color was so deep it seemed a perfect choreography. Then I was touched to see the faraway Italian towns at the border, Italy was bordering on three sides and with the binoculars I could see Varese, the Lake of Como, and maybe further away it could have been Milan! I was also thinking that beyond those places there was the town that Gastone lived and worked as a journalist and who knows if once in awhile he'll think of me. I live for him! On our way back we found some pieces of ice, probably fallen from a cart, and we all rushed to grab some. We were so hot and thirsty. We came back to camp triumphantly, after having dominating so much space, we went about our daily chores. Little Umberto worries us, he has a little bronchitis and has lost weight. Gino is desperate, he went to the Italian Consulate to obtain something and they gave him a pair of orthopedic wooden clogs. This made him very angry. So I went back with him armed with my tough demeanor (another way to conceal my humiliation) to talk to no one else but the Prince of Brandeburgh. We arrived at the Consulate - beautiful building with an impressive marble staircase. After a short wait they let us in and the Prince receives us very cordially. At this point, Gino who had gone in ready to yell and scream was rather intimidated by the Prince, but I explained who we were, etc.,etc. He apologized for not being able to do much at this time, but promising clothing and aid. He explained that there were certain funds, of which he gave us twenty francs. Hand shaking, regards, etc.,etc., and we left feeling a little disappointed and a little content, too. Every little thing will help and we try to philosophize the whole situation. We'll get even I tell Gino, even this day will be put on our account of the things to regulate later. Yesterday I really ended my day well. In the afternoon I was preparing the baby's snack in the bedroom on the hot plate. I thought that the flame was going out, so instead of using one of the few matches I had left I took the bottle of alcohol to add some, but the whole neck of the bottle went on fire including my fingers. Frightened, I let

go of the bottle, dropping it on the wooden floor. I didn't know what to do. I ran to get a pail of water, but I see the tongues of fire spreading near the baby's bed. So I picked up Umberto and dashed out of the room yelling for help. Gino was able to put out the fire, burning his fingers here and there, but in the meantime the whole camp is in a panic screaming and fainting until peace and quiet was restored. I came back with the baby and as a delayed reaction I started to cry thinking of the danger I had faced and what could have happened to the baby. Later I felt a great heat on my arm. The doctor medicated it and put on a bandage. Now I have such big blisters which I hope will soon disappear. But thank God nothing serious (just think if I had burned my face and I'd become uglier!)

Among the new arrivals I discovered the famous Matilde Cassim whom I had already known and had told me that she knew you, Elsa, and our dear friends from Livorno. We spoke at length of our organizations and of the problems which are worrying us. As a result we decided to get all the young people of the camp together to discuss and talk about the current events and our thoughts on different subjects. We would also sing our Jewish songs and prepare for the sabbaths better. Things that lately I've been neglecting. She's very pleasant, plain, and intelligent, and it would be a shame if they separated us now that we've gotten to know and appreciate one another better. She told me of her imprisonment, of her thoughts, and of her journal which unfortunately she had to burn. Even if we get separated, we promised one another that we'd keep in touch. It's so beautiful when we sing, I get so moved - how the music elevates our minds and thoughts!

June 25, 1944
Yesterday we celebrated Gino and it was plain to see how fond everyone is of him. The quartermaster sargeant called me and wanted to know if I wanted to work for the command. They keep an eye on us, they noticed how good I was and how serious I am with my chores. What the work would entail would be setting and serving the table of the commander sargeant and samaritans. In return I would eat with them (good food and all the bread I want). It's a very attractive proposition, but I'd rather stay with my friends even if the food isn't that great. It humiliates me waiting on those people, and anyway, during those hours I have to stay with Umbertino. So that's a closed chapter. I'm sure they're not too pleased with me, and I could have used them to get some favors, but I don't want to lick anyone's shoes. They hired a man because the other girls would not behave well with the military. Yesterday I got permission to go out with Professor Coen and his two daughters to attend a lecture on the post war - something forbidden to us refugees. We met at a bar, it was so funny - first we spread ourselves out at different tables ordering beer. Then one at a time we got up to go to another room where we all met to discuss things. I don't think these are the right people to carry out what

they're proposing. You need young people without any political attachments so that they could dedicate themselves wholeheartedly to this immense enterprise. You should have seen me speak up to the Working Committee. First of all I requested that they obtain a permit for us to participate at these meetings. The President offered me a training period of a couple of weeks, which consisted of going to a children's camp in the mountains where I would supervise and direct the children and learn at the same time how it's done. Oh how I would love it! I'd be in the fresh air with good food, and if I could bring Umbertino, how good it would be for him. But it's only for Swiss children, so I don't want to deceive myself. I can't wait to have all my family settled well so I could make decisions solely based on myself! Silvia told me that close to where she is there is a nursing home and if we can get the money from Mario, Mamma and Emma could go. I tried to get Anna liberated through Mrs. DeMartino as well as through that prince. In the meantime I hope that everything will come to an end and we can think only of ourselves.

June 27, 1944
Sudden orders for me to leave for Brissago - female work camp. Werber had something to do with this. I wouldn't mind going so much if I didn't have to leave my family at this critical period:Emma and Franca away, Umberto sick, and Anna still waiting. Besides, I had such a close friendship with Matilde Cassim and we were organizing such great sabbaths. We wanted to establish through the rabbi a young Jewish camp. What a shame I have to leave! It hurts to see the sad faces of the children and of so many people I had grown fond of. But a new phase of my exile is beginning and I hope it will be my last and we can go back home.

CHAPTER 5: BRISSAGO WOMEN'S WORK CAMP

Here I am in Brissago stretched out on a very soft bed on two white sheets, a little tired and emotional over the events that took place today, June 28. The good-byes at the Majestic were very emotional. All the galbists requested that they come to the station to see me off, but they were not allowed, not even Mamma, but she came anyway with Amedeo and Gino. I was so confused with all the hugs and kisses from everyone and my big box tied with a string, my knapsack, and my suitcase. I came out of it like in a dream. I turned to wave a last goodbye and a very pleasant sight overwhelmed me. All the balconies were full of people waving at me and wishing me well, it was very emotional. Poor Anna was crying and my heart was breaking for her and for leaving that place that had become my home. I had created my comforts and my surroundings with people I was very fond of and who were also fond of me. It hurt very much to leave my poor mother who has become more bent and thinner and who I would like to see somewhere else. The trip went very well even though it rained - my mood suited the weather, grim. In Locarno I saw Silvia for a few minutes. She gave me the good news that Elio arrived in Italy. he's still with the Germans in a camp, but he hopes he can be set free soon. What a beautiful view of Lake Maggiore with the two islands in the middle! It looks like the sea - it's so big! It seemed so strange to travel like a free person again. But from my bags and my expression you could tell I was a refugee. As soon as I arrived I was struck by the imposing sight of the Grand Hotel. Inside it remained like a luxury hotel: a huge hall, lush arm chairs, terrace on the lake, beautiful view - everything clean and well kept. As soon as my former friends saw me they welcomed me with great joy and showed me around and explained all the rules and regulations. It gave me the impression of being a great women's boarding school. Matilde Rietti was so happy to see me, as was Edith, the Cases, and the Ottolenghis. How wonderful not to see the military around. The door is always open with no guard. There's a lot of freedom - we feel like workers, but free ones. And what a feeling to see Italy across the way - a stone throw from the border and beyond that, you're there, Gastone. How I yearn to join you! After a decent German supper, we listened to a boring concert - sung in German. It's strange that we're here in Ticino and all the signs and language are in German. Since there was no room at the hotel they put me up to sleep here at S. George, a nursing home. the dormer room is very clean and cute and I share it with a Polish girl and Mara. Here the foreigners have no modesty at all, they undress in front of everybody with ease. Tomorrow morning I start my work day - wake up at 6:15, we have to walk some to get to the hotel. I'm so homesick for my family - I have to manage on my own in this strange life!

June 29, 1944
As I said before, it's so sweet to sleep between clean white

sheets. The first day went by rather well. Since it is a holiday we worked only half a day. They put me in "flextuber", we have to mend for six hours a day. There's a huge room and when it's nice we can even work out on the terrace. The room is cool and some even have their bathing suits on. The hours are from 7:30 to 11:45 for the morning. I went down to the gardens, so beautiful and well kept - full of flowers and an enormous variety of plants, hydrangeas of different colors, palms, banana plants, etc. We went down to the lake where we could swim and there's even a diving board. Today they even gave me a bathing suit made out of blue wool and it fits me better than the one I made for myself. Then they gave me soap, towels, three hangers, and a roll of toilet paper. The foreigners are terrible, they don't have a minimum of decency. It seems that they are blatantly displaying their nudity both in the rooms and in the halls. They don't care and they say that we Italians are loud and we talk too much. They hush when they see us and they turn the radio to the German stations - so we Italians rented one -.50 cents a day each. Today finally after six months of gypsy living I was able to hang my clothes in a real closet. How great to have a real room and everything in its place. If Mara and I could be by ourselves without that foreigner underfoot. Tonight we laughed so hard. She showed me a bathing suit that she made with a hankie for the top and panties for the bottom and when I told her how pretty she was (in French) she took a handkerchief of Mara's and cut it diagonally and telling us that one half was a bathing suit for Lea and the other half a suit for Mara. We were flabbergasted, she smelled of wine, she must have been drinking. The foreigners like to stay at the St. George because they can go out nights without chaperons - nice reputation! I met some very nice people whose company I enjoy very much - among them, Amalia Levi, the Finzis, one of them is getting married soon and we'll have the celebration here for her. I'm fine here because I've taken up again with former friends who like me and have taken me under their wing. What a great feeling to be able to go in and out on our free time without having to show our card to a guard. We took a walk and visited the town. I'm trying to get Mamma transferred to the St. George - she would really like it - great company and I could see her every night. I started the first steps toward it. And Emma could stay at the hotel and get work for half day at the flextuber. How great it would be! As soon as I get stronger I'll ask for heavier chores so I could make more money. They give us six francs every ten days for lighter chores and eight francs for heavier jobs. For the first two days I'll receive eighty cents on Saturday - I'd like to get my hair done, one of the refugees will do it for twenty cents, and then I could get an ice cream and dessert. Here the food isn't bad. We had potatoes that were well fried , a real coffee with milk, and tonight broth with white pasta and a real meat sauce, meat and salad and this morning milk with tea and good bread. I think that by now the English are near Livorno - great joy! This morning I had the medical examination with a German with whom I spoke in French. He asked me if I was married, if I had any children. Now I'll turn off my

light, it's late and tomorrow morning I have to wake up at six - and I want to get enough sleep. Good night, my love!

July 5, 1944
One week has already gone by in this new place. Overall I'm happy, I'm very much at ease and have gotten used to the new regime. The working hours are longer and I get restless having to sit down for so long. I find all kinds of excuses to get up. The other morning I brought the basket full of mending up and down and then the ones that were already mended down to be ironed. Today I volunteered to take someone's place in the ironing room. This way I learned to iron men's shirts, underwear, etc. You need method and practice and then it goes by fast. Flat things like towels, rags, pillow cases and the like are placed around a roll and get pressed by rotation. It's very funny I had never seen it. I wanted to try the laundry room but after seven hours my hands were bleeding and wrinkled from being in the hot water and detergent. I really didn't like it even if they give you good snacks in between (at 9:30 and at 3:00), bread with jam, cheese, coffee with milk or hot chocolate. Just to get out for awhile I asked to see a doctor and not knowing what to tell the doctor I showed him the pimples I had on my face. I didn't think he would take me seriously and he gave me something to take orally and an ointment and wants to see me every other day. Unbelievable, but I feel better and I have to say that they're very well organized here. Maestro Veneziani came and we were called to be tested for our voices to sing in a choir - I was picked. He teaches us twice a day - we sing chorus from Verdi and Swiss hymns. He's so good that it's a wonderful experience, but we also fear him when he gets angry and calls us "dear girls". I went swimming - not too many know how to swim here, so I've been admired, and I'm the only one who dives from the diving board. Too bad we're only allowed on Saturday and Sunday. I would like to swim across the lake to reach my beloved Italy and you. Three days of work for 1.20 (less .10 for a refugee fund). What a strange feeling, my first Swiss salary.I sent it to Mamma as with my first salary in Livorno. I'm sure it pleased her very much. But on Monday the 10th I'll get six francs all together - I have so many cravings! The foreign roommate is so strange. I heard that she goes with an old man. Even if I don't approve I feel sorry for these young people who are all alone with no families and are being sent here and there and have to attract males by drinking or with flashy make-up. It's another way to forget the problems and pains of the war. Saturday night we had the permission to attend a ball here in town until midnight. I didn't feel like going, but all the foreigners went well dressed, some in slacks and heavy makeup. I pray to God that the day will come when I can start my life with Gastone, I feel stronger, morally straight - no bad thoughts, and you, Gastone, should not have any worries about me. At night I'm so tired that I don't even find time to write or do anything for myself. I listen to the radio - our allies are very close to Livorno - Cecina is English. Our beloved poor lands are free! There will be some lectures in Lugano to plan some courses and the

activities which could prove useful in the post war periods and we have to chose two delegates among us. Of course the foreigners choose two Germans and they talk amongst themselves and they wouldn't bother telling us what's going on. I propose that at least one of the delegates be Italian and I vote for Amelia Levi who's good and very intelligent. Lots of discussion and we finally came to a vote - there are only 30 Italians and 130 foreigners - we rated the situation and decided that Amelia be a vice. Besides language classes, we'd like some courses on cutting men's shirts, gymnastics and others. Ruth Calicer, who's German but knows Italian, likes us and translates for us when necessary. She's something like our chief. I don't like German, but I'm trying to learn it, at least the most used words. I had my revenge, when during practice with Veneziani, the foreigners didn't understand anything and when they suggested that they sing in German he got furious, the Italian girls were asked by the maestro to teach them the correct pronunciation of the words of the Italian songs. Soon we'll have an exhibition where each one of us will exhibit and sell a work that she excels in. The profits will go towards the refugee fund and who knows maybe we'll get orders. Let's hope! I'll knit some booties, that's my specialty now, I'd love to make some extra money.

Today I had my hair done by the camp's hairdresser, you Gastone always encouraged me to be well groomed under every circumstance. I then wore a pretty dress that I made myself - I've really become quite good! If I could get a job in the dressmaking department, I could make 80 cents a day instead of 60. But who knows because for the first two weeks there's no raise. We the refugees manage the internal affairs. The director is Swiss and so is the vice and some aids and then there are some men, husbands of refugee, who are in the office and they've acquired a Swiss commanding tone. But when you come down to it, nobody is the boss and everybody respects the rules and regulations for our own good. Yesterday I had a long talk with the superior of the St. George concerning Mamma and Emma's eventual transfer - she's so kind but she told me it was not up to her - There I met the poet Lina Schwatz with whom I had a long conversation. She's a very pleasant individual much different than the one I had imagined when as a young girl I read her children's poems. She's a very lively little old lady with an aucustic horn to her ear and she begged me to come back and see her whenever I can to keep her company - her sister is also with her. When I think of Mamma and Emma I feel almost guilty that I'm eating such good things and sleeping with sheets on the bed. You should have seen me yesterday in the laundry room, I had a huge black rubber apron on and enormous boots, I really don't like it - I'd like to try gardening - be outdoors, move around. They even let us wear pants to be freer. We water and prune plants and clean the garden, but at the moment there are no free spots. The vice director is very kind and we often have long chats, then she gave me an embroidered shirt out of which I made a very pretty blouse. I have to leave you Gastone it's time to "repasser". Even though I try to find the best

of every situation, I still have moments of discomfort, I keep thinking of you and of the terrible things you must have endured. From the nearby border there are always new refugees that are brought in and the other night when I got back to the St. George there was a new group accompanied by soldiers - just think if you had been among them! I would have fainted from happiness! But now I think it was better for you to have stayed in Italy. When we go back home at night, a group of us Italians have to walk up a hill, so we sing our nostalgic songs and for each one of us they have a different meaning and memory. Amelia Levi is leaving to join her father, I'm sorry, we had become such good friends, she had her room next to mine and in the evening we'd get together and talk. Noemi Amar's father has just arrived - he's 80 years old! It still must be pretty bad in Italy, for a man that age to decide to leave. I'm thinking of your grandfather, of Elsa and the others - will they be free now? I hope so! Today Maestro Veneziani left - too bad, his lessons were so good!

July 8, 1944 - With Veneziani's music we'd forget what world we were living in. He hopes to be able to come twice a week and hopes to make a tournee with us through the other camps. Just think Gastone, how many things I've learned, even a choir singer. Today I was promoted, from mending to sewing machine - eight hours - it's harder but more rewarding. I have more responsibilities and I make 80 cents a day. You should see what beautiful patches I've learned to make. I have to beep always in and not out, I'm really learning a lot of practical things. It's not easy, for everything you need method and patience but now I can say that I've learned how to mend, iron well - even man's wear and how to patch up. I think all this can be very handy in life in case I'll have to work or live in my own house, and besides I've learned how to really clean thoroughly. The other day I was called in dress-making. I was so happy thinking that I'd get transferred there, but instead they wanted me to clean. There was a German girl who thought she could order us around criticizing us and wanting us to clean the places that we had already cleaned but in such a rude way that I finally told her a thing or two in French and left while Mara stayed to clean those big windows. After a while she came crying to me because those German girls were really treating her bad - so we went to Ruth and told her everything. She called those girls in and really scolded them - they had to apologize to us and I really enjoyed the whole thing. Now I'm meeting Silvia - she's supposed to come with Paolo -it's Saturday, it's a holiday and I'm happy and I took a wonderful bath.

July 18, 1944 - I can't believe Gastone that I would reach this date without seeing you or even receiving news from you. I'm feeling down and I have this wild desire to see you even for one minute - where are you? What are you doing - how do you spend your days - it's like a broken record in my mind - thinking about it over and over again. Last year we were all together in Colle Mountains and Elio was also with us - and at night how we laughed

trying to bring up the mattress from the worker - we were so many to sleep and you had to sleep on the floor in the dining room, we thought it was so awful. And then I had to sleep on the hard floor on the hay and not even on a mattress! I look at you in the photograph and it seems that you want to encourage me. You're smiling saying "Come on Pusse, don't look so sad - courage - you know it won't be for long" But how long have I tried to be cheerful thinking of just that, but time is passing terribly slow and fast and it's almost a year that I don't see you nor hear your dear voice. I tried every means to find out something, from Palestine, by air mail, by normal mail, through Red Cross - but nothing, always nothing. With my great dismay they have stolen my red scarf - one of the few things I had from you. I'm livid, everybody always admired it, but if I discover who did it, I'll scratch her eyes out! They also took a pair of sandals and I only have a pair of clogs left and having to walk from Locarno my feet are in pretty bad shape. By the way we got permission to go as far as fifty km from here, so Saturday I went to Locarno with my friends and we splurged the five francs that the Italian Consul had sent us. We were real ladies - we sat at a bar. We ate all the pastries we wanted using all the stamps that our good Dr. Clava gave us and then we even went to the movies. It was an American movie with Ginger Rogers "Roxie Hart", in English with French subtitles. Then I went to Silvia's where I stayed until Sunday night. She lives in a very nice house with a young widow, but she feels so lonely. And Paolo is still not well, he has an annoying bronchitis and I feel bad because in order to come to me on Saturday they got caught in a downpour and at night he was crying from a painful ear-ache. I was able to sleep soundly until 10:00 AM - it's been ages since I slept that late. We had a delicious lunch and Anna came in the afternoon. She's been free since ten days ago, if that's what you want to call it - she wanted it so badly. She's with the nuns from Medoscio, a nearby town, in a convent over a cliff. Poor Anna, she's very disappointed with the nuns, they make her do all the hard work all day long - worse than a servant, and they probably don't pay her either. She has to take care of sick children and has to treat them badly and slap them if they don't obey just like the nuns do. She's isolated, she has no friends - just nuns and sick children. I don't think she'll last very long. As a reaction she'll be worse than before. Maybe this will make her appreciate her family more and appease her restless personality. I'll do my best to get her out of there and I hope the director could have her come to Brissago. I don't like her being exposed to children with TB. But I fear if she comes here she won't choose suitable friends. The other night some foreigners came back to the camp dead drunk. My roommate gave me a smirk when I came back since I had not been in Saturday night. I don't care what she thinks, I'm happy I saw Silvia. She had a letter from Elio transferred from Vienna near Milano and was able to see Anna Vigna. Oh God, if he could only escape and come here. Poor Silvia, she was so emotional. In the letter Elio tells that he was captured on St. Joseph's Day - what a bad time he must have had!

That night I walked home (12km) to save money and also because on Sundays there are no buses. I met my friends in Ascona - they had gone swimming with their friends from Gordola. This way we all went back together, tired, but happy and with aching feet. All together, I'm pretty content with the present situation. The director is happy with me and I have the possibility to go to Locarno. I asked for permission, but no way. I would have loved to surprise them - meet my new niece, Nella. Franca is back with the baby and they all tell me that she is very pretty and chubby. I would like to have Mamma and Emma come to the St. George - we organize beautiful outings. Maybe tonight we'll go sailing and I'll think of you, Gastone, near me. My very best wishes to you, my love, may you be safe and sound and may God speed our love so that you may have your Pusse in your arms real soon. Good-bye, the gong is calling me to make patches, but I've also learned to patch men's trouser pockets.

July 21, 1944
I can't believe the good news we've just received - it's too good to be true: someone tried to kill Hitler and revolution in Germany! Are we really near the end? Hurray! My dear Gastone, I'll soon be with you. We were all crazy with joy - we all ran out. I had my salary (six francs and stamps for chocolate). Then we bought fruit and we ate like pigs and drank too -- apple cider! But I don't want to deceive myself too much - you never know. I had beautiful gifts from Stiffel: a pair of new sandals from Paris - leather - and a white blouse and a pure silk blue skirt. This is how it happened: I went out in the garden to water the tomatoes - up and down from the lake with my old clogs, the only ones I owned. They broke and I was barefooted. That wonderful woman took me to her room and gave me her sandals saying they were too tight for her. Brand new! Then she made me pick between a dress and a skirt and a blouse - and I picked the latter. Now I'm all set, Morella left me her clogs. Now I'd like very much to find my scarf. Today besides learning how to sew pockets I learned how to change shirt cuffs. My dear Gastone, you'll see what beautiful collars I can make for your shirts. I got that spinster of Disegni and company mad, old sourpusses, while the chief, Krudel, who I didn't like because she's German is very good hearted and very kind. Too bad Katia is leaving, she's so sweet, she's the one who taught me how to sew so well without even basting first. I don't know how we understood one another, because she spoke Russian or German and I spoke French and a little English. Dear Mamma, I have a chocolate bar and I'm sending it to you. Emma writes that I shouldn't be a softie with Anna, that it would do her good to stay where she is and that you, Gastone, would approve. See you soon, Gastone my love, I have a feeling that sooner or later I'll surprise you with a visit and you'll have me underfoot when you least expect it. But if I catch you in a flagrant situation...I'll kill you. Goodnight, I'm cheerful tonight and in a good mood!

August 21, 1944
Finally I've found time to resume my conversa
with you, Gastone. Up to now it hasn't been
30th I left with a group of girls for Gordola
other young people from the other camps for t
the mountains. There were about 90 of us -
equipped with hiking boots, sleeping bags, and
hike was rather hard and I was afraid I would
got used to it and I fell right into step en
breeze with the typical lush greenery of th
brooks and small bridges surrounding the t
After two and a half hours of continuous hi
Corippo - our resting goal. The last part
crossed a wooden bridge over a huge preci
rushing water from a cascade which ended up i
beautiful emerald green lake - a very emotional
there a semi desert shepherd's town with small
busy building a fire to cook our dinner then
sleeping quarters in a barn on the upper level
We were famished and we ate heartily a very a
were all very cheerful and were all sitting a
urn and after saying a prayer of thanksgiving
around. From a tree there was a lamp reflecti
made the whole scene into a fairy and fantasy
sang in all languages, and after, totally exhau
on the soft earth covered with hay with the th
at 5AM to reach the peak at 2,000 meters. Uni
morning was raining, we washed ourselves as be
fountain and then we all gathered in a classro
to peel potatoes and clean string beans. We sa
unsolvable problems. Our vice director was
Janeku, Swiss, she behaved just like one of us
our games and songs so that we even forgot tha
the afternoon it had stopped raining, some of
We went up quite a bit. It's the first time th
and I must say that it's an exhilarating expe
see the world from a different physical aspect
within oneself it makes one forget the pains o
and its sad connotations, all I feel now is the
my youth and of my full capacity and streng
changing as we were getting higher, always bi
the cherries...bunches of that marvelous red f
The boys climbed the tree and brought us bra
stripping the trees and letting a shower of ch
did not feel tired, only out of breath while
that would pass as soon as I stopped. Many were
the previous Sunday on our trip to Ascona.
Saturday night and we had camped outside the h
we had sat around singing and discussing very
We always discuss in French because that's
commonly known.

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The next morning we marched by three - a girl in the middle flanked by two boys - All along the way we sang hymns from the Russian marines, air force and our partisans, now I learned them well and I like them very much. I arrived after doing 12 Km all in one breath, but I wasn't tired only overheated, and as soon as we got to a beautiful park, we undressed and dived in the lake for a refreshing swim. I swam and rowed and then to get dried we ran back and forth playing ball, I moved so much that after having spent weeks mending at the flixtuber, I got my fill of exercise. We ate like pigs and again at night we started our hike. We got back late a little out of breath and tired but I felt like a different person. I felt strong and healthy, with a joy for life and knowing that there's still something good and beautiful in the world - you only need to appreciate it. When I went back Mara looked at me as if she didn't recognize me - commenting on how bright my eyes were and how rosy and radiant I was! Gastone if you had seen me at that moment you would have found me beautiful (how modest I am).

In the morning I resumed my work with more energy and with more trust. But at night I was gloomy again knowing that you couldn't participate in my life and my thoughts and that while I was so happy and gay, you're probably suffering. Going back to the cherries, we all started to talk around the trees, and I got friendly with a Belgian named David (I don't remember his last name it was hard) he's 25 and very smart, cultured and full of energy and has faith in an ideal that's also becoming mine. We discussed at length and I rebutted many times but I felt that the deeper we got the more he was convincing me. It was not easy at the beginning to understand since we were speaking French, all the nuances of his thoughts, French is neither my language or his, but we got across the essentials. From then, he was always close to me helping me out in difficult situations. The next day we made a wonderful one day excursion and when we returned, Matilde Rietti and I decided to go swimming near a cascade - an enchanting spot - We put on our bathing suits under our dresses and we walked quite a bit to get there, it was almost dark. We went across a lane and down a way, took off our dresses and heard everyone screaming not to go in that it could be dangerous for the current and the freezing temperature of the water. But it was so breathtakingly beautiful - the color was a very deep emerald green, an enchanted place. The water was freezing and we took a very short dip and got back out, but it felt so invigorating. The boys were shocked at our courage and left us so we could get dressed, but we didn't bring a change of underwear and we had to put our dress over the soaking bathing suit. We got back just in time for supper.

On our way back on Tuesday, it was fantastic. We decided to take a different route, we climbed through beautiful woods, the knapsack got very heavy and all of a sudden - crack - the handle broke. It's a good thing David helped me to fix it and we caught up with the others. At a certain point I saw a waterfall, I was thirsty and threw myself forward to have a drink while David begged me not to

do it since I was so overheated. For a while he carried my sac and we got to the top in a town called "Mergoscia" where we stopped to eat. He realized, poor guy, that he had left his sac near the waterfall and had to go back to get it. We had a delicious meal of pasta and then the zionist group headed by Enoh invited us for a drink of must - it was so good that I had about 8 small glasses. Enoh is a real nice boy and he always calls me "Laiola" diminutive of Lea in yiddish, a language that he knows very well. I've learned several Jewish hymns and many passages from the Koran. The return trip went very fast, we arrived in a town near Locarno, called "Lanero" where we stopped to go swimming in an enchanting place and then we walked to Gordola, where the campers prepared a wonderful meal for us. At night, since it was August 1, we saw the bonfires on the mountains - a very spectacular view. We had one ourselves and we danced around it, it made me feel like a wild creature - and then songs and dances with guitar and mandolins - a few talks among which, one from the head of the men's camp - a spirited young man. But what a strange picture, I was trying to see myself as a different person outside that group. I felt so tender at the thought of having you close to me, at that particular moment, I closed my eyes trying to live the illusion but when I opened them I saw David's eyes staring at me in a strange way and in his face I thought I was seeing your dear features - he really looks like you. He's tall, dark and even his nose is like yours. He held my hand tight, maybe he knows what I was thinking. We continued to sing till midnight. Then they walked us to our abode, in a little house on a beautiful lawn, under a hut with some hay, where I slept for just a few hours. At 4 in the morning they woke me up with a pail of water thrown at my face.

After breakfast, we ran to the station and we arrived in Brissago on Wednesday morning at 7 AM hopping and jumping, singing at the top of our lungs. After a bath and breakfast, at 8:30 I was back working at the sewing machine. I didn't think I still could have the strength. I was the brightest and not at all tired. My face was radiant with good health, my face was tanned by the sun and by the good air. Besides having had such a good time I was also happy to have been able to discuss at length our problems and other interesting topics. I was carried away by the Zionists and was convinced by the right ideals which I thought were for the right cause, and which I should support - but I don't feel like going to Palestine. I learned to sing many songs which I hope I'll always remember, but most of all I feel very enthusiastic for the communist ideas, I'm only sorry that I'm not well acquainted with the period before the fascist, that my reaction seems logical to hold on to new ideals but I have to deepen my knowledge. Read, write and study further before choosing the right philosophy. I have a craving for knowledge, I want to know what would be best for our world in the future beyond barriers and prejudices, David has opened my mind and broadened my horizons and I'm very enthusiastic about the prospects of learning. He promised me an interesting book on these problems. But as usual, after spending four days in

complete freedom of mind and thought with no worries and free to enjoy every minute of this liberated state, here I am again with my daily routine of work and more work but I'm saddened that I can't confide my thoughts to you Gastone, to share with you my doubts and to hear what you think of these new ideals that fill my mind - ask for your advice and discuss together like we've always done. There's a lot to do for Thursday's preparations. Our friend Roberta Finzi is getting married to Levi from Mezzovico. We're all committed to make the event a great success. We got up earlier than usual and decorated the great hall for the ceremony as if it were a small temple with a canopy with our star with six golden points and candles. Flowers, rugs, and everything that was possible to be done. Some made the gown, others the shoes, veil, etc. - everyone cooperated to make the ceremony as beautiful and touching as possible. I was helping with her dress and my hands were trembling, she chose me to accompany her to city hall and then back to camp; the religious ceremony was stupendous. She came down the marble staircase preceded by two children and in back the procession of her family and all of us marching to the music of Mendhelson, then we all sang the Beraha, after a long sermon the rabbi gave them his blessing and I couldn't stop crying and I thought how beautiful it would be for us two to get married in a similar fashion - so simple and emotional for everyone - We then sang religious hymns and everyone was very moved. The director had a wonderful meal prepared for everybody. The newlyweds had a table prepared for themselves and the people they wanted to have close. They then left on a boat with everybody waving their goodbyes - it seemed like they were taking some trip - but they were only going to Ascona (very close by) for their honeymoon. But poor people, on Monday they were already separated. She came back here and he to Mezzovico - but they're nearby and can see each other often. Life is really strange - all of lifes events like births, weddings and deaths are seen under a different light; here a young mother has just arrived with her child - she had gotten married here (she had been pregnant) everybody was surrounding her and we all did something for her baby - I feel like I'm living out the movie "Lonely Girls".

I have three days off and I'm leaving for Lugano. I'm busy getting ready for this vacation and I already spent my hard earned salary (all of 12 francs) on sweets and presents for everybody. The ticket is paid for and off I am - tears and goodbyes as if I was going God knows where. What a strange feeling I had to see the Majestic again. It didn't seem the same as the one I had left 6 weeks before - new faces, new rules, I felt like a stranger - a guest - but the few who knew me welcomed me happily. Mamma was well and Nellina was a real sweetheart, I finally met her and was able to hold her! Great news: Amadeo and Gino are off to a work camp: Pian S. Giacomo - Mamma is going to be transferred to Brissago in the nursing home S. Giorgio. I got here at here right time. I helped with the packing, I mended my brother's pants (I'm a pro at that now) and I said a final goodbye to the Majestic and to the lake. Mamma was sad

to leave Lugano but I was very glad to take her away since she was going to be left alone there with only Franca - with her sons away, especially Amedeo who was so caring towards her, she would have been very lonely - and now my mother is here with me.

Aug. 21, 1944 (IV notebook)
So Mamma is here with me at S. Giorgio's as I had wished. But she's not that happy since it's a nursing home for old people, in comparison she seems like a young girl, she walks and moves with great agility and she's full of energy. At 1 o'clock and at night I run here to be with her, but she spends the rest of the time all alone and when she sees me it's a great joy to me to see how anxious and how happy I make her , even the other ladies wait for me with such impatience. The other night I gave them a good time doing for them some magic tricks and telling them some funny stories that made them laugh- The first night however something awful happened: I had Mamma go up to my room where with my friends we were talking and laughing a little too loudly - when a crazy refugee barges in yelling and screaming that it was 9:30 and we were still making noise - a little nun came up very frightened and tried to calm the hysterical girl. The next morning Ms. Stoz calls me and Mamma scolding us and ordering us to move to the hotel. I really got very upset that now that I have my mother with me I can only be with her at night. But she didn't listen to reason and I was very angry. I tried again in the afternoon to convince her to make me stay and finally she agreed as long as we kept quiet and she gave me an order for a pair of slippers made- so everything was worked out for the best.

Saturday, Aug. 12th, we had the famous exhibition. Silvia came and I had Mamma come also so she would get distracted. In the afternoon we had the raffle and I was behind the ring toss table equipped with bottles and for other games with dice you received a price according to the points you made - 30 cents a throw - At the beginning there was hardly anyone but then the boys arrived from their camp and I did great business! I felt like a gypsy at an amusement park. David was also there and he gave me the candy that he had won. We laughed a lot - we had music, a bar, everything was well organized. Silvia introduced me to the consul and his wife who played a lot but lost. One of the boys was like the town - crier getting people to come to my booth - At a certain point I ran out of prizes and I got tired of being there so I left. I didn't dance like the others, I preferred talking to the boys about serious things and we planned to meet the following Sunday to continue our discussions. David brought me the book he promised me " The Secret of the Russian Power" by the Swiss Beiker. We ate in the garden and Nadia Vamos was also there, my old scarlet fever friend, she brought me sweets and scolded me for not having answered her long and loving letters. Our friendship seemed so far away for me now. At night there was a variety show and at about 11:30 everyone left because of the last bus to Locarno so Silvia left. After, there was a dance with the band of the boys from Mezzovico, they were

practically all Italians. David stayed on the side talking about serious things and I asked him why he didn't join the others, he said that he didn't like to dance and asked me if I liked it. I said yes and I danced a little. When David said goodbye he told me that he would make sure he learned how to dance for the next time so he could dance with me. Please Gastone don't be angry with me, maybe you don't approve of me but I just felt something I had never felt before - a sense of flirting in being the object of so much attention not only from him but I see that many boys are attracted to me and this makes me very happy. It's bad I know - forgive me - I didn't do anything to encourage this, I'm acting and behaving very lady like. I'm just a silly girl - a little vain. I'm a little depressed at this thought but my femininity woke up in me - don't be jealous - there's no reason to be, I love you more than ever and I'm forever saddened that you're not here with me. When unconsciously I compare you with the others, you always come out on top and nobody could come close to you, physically and spiritually. I went back home at 1, the dance went on until 2.

On Sunday we all got together and I had a long discussion with David on religion. He asked me if I was a Zionist. Right now I don't feel I could make a decision . I feel a strong urge in me to learn the truth to search for what's good and beautiful. I try to listen to all sides and reflect on them but I'm not in a condition to decide yet. According to David, the world of the future is that of creating a nation without borders where justice and equality reign supreme and then expand it to the rest of the world so there would not be the need to form a nation for Hebrew people - and the Jewish problem would be solved without the need of Zionism. What I answered was that if I had to think that my children, grandchildren and great grandchildren would have to suffer and go through what we went through then I would make any sacrifice to avoid it now - even to go to Palestine and leaving my beloved Italy. But on my return to Italy I would start a reconstruction job to build it up again - and I could do the same in another land where all the persecuted Jews could always find refuge. Now that I read that book and others about Russia, I believe that it's probable that Europe will arrive at a socialist solution - where one would abolish all frontiers and the people could work only for the common good. Is this Utopia? No, because most people agree with the idea that it's enough to live with as little as possible as long as there's peace and justice for all. If everyone would focus their energy and good will towards this goal I think in time it could be achieved. It will be a battle against others who have different principles but they are a minority and I'm sure capitalism will be abolished. Everyone will have to work and contribute to the necessary equilibrium and give to society all that they can. It won't be easy of course, and many problems will arise. My mind cannot digest all of these new ideas that are being forced down on me, I'll need time to clear my brain but I'm sure I'll get there (but not alone). Germany, the culprit, should pay and get its proper punishment but should not be destroyed, the population is not responsible, but the government

is. For starters, we have to create "the united states of Europe" based on the American system - but how can an undemocratic Russia be part of it - it's a dictatorship with only one party, and this frightens me. The example comes from the people and in Russia it seems that the internal organization works. Enough now with these thoughts. They upset my mind already muddled with so many other uncertainties - I have to clarify my ideas. As far as the religious aspect, since I haven't been practicing my religion much, I think it would be ideal to arrive at one singular religion which would enfold the best of all ideals and traditions of the others, because in theory they all have one thing in common - to preach the concept of goodness. I know that's impossible, but I think of how many atrocities and wars have occurred in the name of religion. It would be ideal to have just one. David goes the other way and says he would like to abolish the concept of God, nothing after death, etc., that we all attribute to God that which we cannot grasp by our intelligence. With all this I don't agree with him, since we can see that science is explaining many phenomena that before were known and were attributed to God. In the future I'm sure we'll be able to unveil many of the mysteries that obscure our minds. Getting back to Sunday, I went swimming after all - David cannot swim. Even in this I compare you to him. You're so good in sports, in dancing and everything that young people do. I can't fathom that a young man can't do these things. In the afternoon we met again on the lawn behind the tobacco plant and there I had to argue Matilde Cassim's radical ideas. Whenever she doesn't have an answer for something she puts religion as the basis for everything. We have to try to abolish barriers, there's state and there's state. We can't think of creating a new one in Palestine where capitalism is evident more than any other place. If we went there to work England would get wealthier. Its strategy has been putting Jewish against the Arabs and you can't obtain anything from England through force. We have to start with Europe and free the colonies. I changed my mind about Matilde, I believed her to be stronger, energetic, and independent. She proved herself to be weak, opportunistic, and selfish. When she was alone, she stuck to me and Mara, but since her mother arrived she's a completely different person. Maybe the mother is domineering, she's certainly rude and stubborn. I feel sorry for her and that's why I tried to get close to her, but I see that she only likes to be the center of attraction and in all our discussions she always wants to promote Zionism. I need patience, I know that at the Majestic she didn't behave too well with my family. At night we took a nice walk on the holy steps - breathtaking view. We talked about women's rights and I got very enthusiastic about it. It's right, like in Russia, that the women should have other responsibilities outside of the house and contribute to society by taking an active part in politics. I don't want to go overboard and place women as equal to men. As a wife the woman should consider the man as her support, both physical and moral. Anyway, I hope that you agree with me in this because I don't feel I could start a routine of house, food shopping, kids, and pots and pans. I feel that since I left you a

great evolution has taken place in me. I hope you'll still love me anyway. I'm not a little girl anymore - I have matured a lot after going through all the hardships, fighting and facing the problems of daily survival and meeting all the different types of people. Of course you probably have also changed and your experiences are different than mine. Up to now we shaped our minds with mutual experiences and events, but now?...How many things we have to tell one another and how pleasant discussing things together again. I'd be very annoyed if David has illuded himself on my account. I enjoy his company to talk to him - he's intelligent and cultured and more mature than I am, but next time he comes I'll tell him about you, Gastone. This way if he has any ideas everything will be cleared - I have to deal with this very diplomatically.

August 22, 1944
Hurray, hurray! Tomorrow Mamma, Emma, and I will be transferred to the Grand Hotel. I'm so happy - I haven't seen Emma in three months, there will be so many things to talk about. She'll be happy here, they'll give her some light jobs for half a day. Even Mamma who felt useless staying there without doing anything will be happy working. Now the three of us will share a beautiful room on the lake. I've already spoken to the director - I'm a little sad to leave the S. George, especially for Mara who will be a little lost without me. I don't know if I said that the work here at the hotel is well organized. We are divided into groups and we take turns in the cleaning, cooking, table services, laundry, ironing, sewing, and even gardening. Every ten days they pay us and give us stamps for chocolate. Hard jobs are paid 8 francs and the lighter ones 6 francs. We sleep in real beds in rooms with the bare necessities, but which we have to keep very clean. We each have two aprons with blue and white polka dots and they gave us a roll of numbers to attach to every item of clothing - mine is Z.L.3750. The fix-tuber is a big room where one mends and sews and uses the sewing machine. Then everything is sent to the ironing place which is in the basement next to the laundry rooms. Everything that arrives here is washed first, even the men's stuff that comes from camp Pian S. Giacomo in big bags (one each and every item has the number of the owner, the same as shown on the outside of the bag). After everything is washed, mended, and ironed, it's put back in its proper bag and sent by truck to Pian S. Giacomo. We also have a nurse for emergency and for first aid. The doctor, who's helped by the nurse is a refugee. Right now we have Olga D'Urbino who arrived a few days ago with her sister Lidia Orefice, who's our boss in the fix-tuber. I remember how my heart was pounding, as usual, when I looked at the list of new arrivals, and I noticed the name Orefice. I was hoping it would be your mother - what a disappointment! Emma became very friendly with the two sisters. I remember that at the Majestic there was a third sister of theirs who married a Levi. Her husband who was an invalid arrived after many hardships. They have two daughters and a son, Carlo. Lidia is a widow and has a daughter, Anna Maria, with whom I've become very friendly. Now they've started to reunite small families, so

Gino, Franca, and the children are now together. This was a beautiful week - afternoons I took a course on how to make stuffed animals, dolls, balls, and paint paper for books - very enjoyable and useful things. I made a doll that I gave to Emma to save for me to put in back of the car for good luck (when we'll have a car). I made another beautiful doll for Schwartz's granddaughter who showed me her gratitude by giving me a box of chocolates and other things. I got a letter from David asking me if I read the book and what I thought of it and says he's coming over on Sunday to see me. I decided not to answer him and to speak to him seriously in person and tell him that I'm engaged. Cantoni came over the other night - he spoke so well. The director was also there. He spoke in general of the women's mission - I agree with him 100%. Then we were heading toward some more dangerous territory on international affairs and Giuliana Mortara was very insistent to talk about it, but she knows that we can't get involved in politics. In fact I saw Stoz make a face rather, objecting to the discussion. The next day I spoke alone to Cantoni and asked him how he could conciliate his communist ideas with Judaism and Zionism. He sort of persuaded me, but he didn't agree with my friends ideas and theories. He said they were no longer Jewish - how do you like that ? However, I hope to be able to talk with him more, he's a very valuable man with broad ideas and thinks differently from Matilde Cassim - whatever she has to say. Now that I know Giuliana Mortara better, I have a better impression of her. I thought she was superficial, but she has clear ideas, she's serious and pleasant. She asked me if I want to go with her to the dishes, this way we would have more free time to do more pleasant and interesting things. I asked Stoz to change, but she said no because I'm too good at the sewing machine and she has no one to replace me. Something funny happened, by the way - I had to change the cuffs of a man's shirt, but I didn't have the same pieces of fabric as the shirt, so I changed them with a completely different color. I pinned a note to the shirt apologizing, but I couldn't do any better and signed the note with my number Z.L. I got a very nice note from the owner telling me what a beautiful job I had done on the shirt and that he would love to come to my camp and meet me in person and would like to know my real name. He signs with his number, but also his name. We laughed so much with Mara when I showed her the letter. Of course I didn't follow it through, but it was funny!

August 25, 1944
Mamma and Emma are here since the 23rd at the Grand Hotel of Brissago. Emma has completely recuperated, both physically and mentally - I'm so happy for her! The stay at Aquarossa was good for her. She has met some very interesting and cultured people who love her dearly and in them she has found understanding and her will to live again. Before, she was always down without any scope in life or any ambition - depressed physically and morally. Being away from the family was also good for her. I think it's great to have the family around, but it makes you too dependent on its members. Now she's herself, she has found the strength to stand on

her own two feet and it's the best thing I could expect. I have to be thankful for Switzerland also for my part - I will return to Italy to Gastone - even if I have suffered terribly all these months away from him. I have learned valuable lessons in life, both practical and spiritual and I feel so much stronger that I'm ready to face any future obstacle. We have a beautiful room with three beds, soft mattresses and linen sheets, sofa, night tables, two sinks, and a terrace on the lake. What else could anyone want? It's up to me to keep it clean. Tuesday the 15th I went to Gordola where the work camp is being closed and the boys invited us for a farewell dinner. It was great! The table was set meticulously - the best service - appetizers, entree, main dish of roast with fried potatoes, a cream dessert with cherries, chocolates, coffee, and cigarettes - a complete feast! In the afternoon a trip to Tenero and swimming. I spoke at length to the director of the camp thinking that he was a refugee. I felt very bad - we laughed though. At night we walked back to Brissago barefooted. I befriended Terese, I didn't like her at first, but then when she told me how much she had suffered, I began to like her. She wanted me to sleep with her so that I didn't have to go up to S. George by myself. In the morning I was surprised to hear that Anna had run away to look for me and I wasn't there. Mamma was very upset because Anna didn't want to go back to the nuns. So Sunday I went up there, a real hike and I really don't envy her. I told her that I would do my best to let her come to Brissago, but I'm afraid that that's not the right place for her either. Afterwards I went to see Silvia, she's so depressed. Life as a free person is so expensive and the money she has is not enough. Besides she doesn't hear from Elio regularly and the child is not well. The landlady is a pain in the neck and I didn't know what else to say or do to cheer her up. I walked back home with Giuliana, who's very nice and has a crush on Amedeo, the usual Don Juan. Ms. Stoz is not there and I took advantage of the situation to have Ms. Stiffel put me at the dishes. It's harder work, but I have free hours both in the morning and afternoon. This way I can go swimming every day and read and write. Instead of sitting down all day I run around with piles of dishes - you should see how good I've become at balancing them. The boss is satisfied, she said the one that was there before was very slow. The beauty of being at this job is to do the job well but fast, this way as soon as you're done you're free to go. At the sewing machine I had a fixed job and the hours were endless. Mamma and Emma are also free in the afternoon, so I can spend time with them. Mario sent some dollars, but they're held up. Mamma could get her freedom, but I think she's better off here than free like Silvia, worrying about money. I talked to Emma about ever so many things, but I still have things to talk about. I read "The United States of Europe", a very interesting brochure, but I don't agree with some aspects of it. that's another thing I want to discuss with Emma. And now a very beautiful thing: the other day while I was busy making my stuffed toys, the attorney for the workers committee came to look for me. I didn't even recognize him. The committee is interested in the after war reorganization.

While I was staying at the Majestic I went to one of their debates even though I had been forbidden to do so. Testa came expressly to see me because he had noticed me and wanted to know if I was still interested in taking a course. I thought they had forgotten all about it, but very enthusiastically I accepted. I would have to go to Zurich for a week for a series of lectures on projects to undertake in Italy upon our return. I called Mara and she also wants to do it. He asked me if there were other girls also interested and I mentioned Giuliana, D'Urbino, and Ruth Kalicer. Others would like to go , but they're absolutely not qualified. Among the sixty that were present at the debate in Lugano they picked only fifteen, and I'm one among them. Again yesterday while I was at work with my huge apron they came looking for me to find out if I really decided to commit myself to this work. I answered with such enthusiasm that they all laughed. The course will take place from the ninth to the fifteenth of September at Ascona and the director gave me her permission. I would have preferred Zurich this way I would have traveled and seen new things, but at least I'll stay with my family. They asked me if I was ready to leave as soon as the frontiers open. Imagine that, just the thought of being able to run to you right away, Gastone, would be worth while, I would even come on foot if there were no other means. The decision was then taken, I would put my heart and soul into this great ideal of reconstructing Italy, a free and new Italy. I would have to work harder and have more to do than here, but with what impetus and enthusiasm for such a grandiose ideal. My dear Gastone, this will not prevent me from staying with you and dedicate myself to you body and soul. I only hope that you share my ideas and therefore cooperate with me to carry out our principles.It will be like this, right? And even if we've suffered much we'll thank God that He has given all this happiness which we'll appreciate more after all the struggles we had to endure. Testa wrote to me, he had left his glasses behind and I sent them to him. I saw Matilde Cassim a little depressed, she asked me why I was so cheerful. When I told her why and that I was sorry that she couldn't participate, to my surprise she asked me if she could also join. I pointed out that this was a project directed for Italy and she wanted to go directly to Palestine. But she insisted that she would be interested because she would have to go to Italy first. I promised her that I would look into it. When I told Mara and Giuliana they really got angry with me. I don't know what to do now, I guess I'll let her have the best of me.

August 26, 1944
Something unpleasant happened last night and I'm sure if Ruth Kalicer had been there it would not have happened. Ruth doesn't want to have anything to do with freizait (free hours for organizing) because she's tired and wants to save her energy for after the war. It was a "musical" evening and before the concert started, which was supposed to raise our spirits, that horrid Gerard, that unpleasant German who's now in charge of that, read an article in German regarding the Italians. We all wanted the

translation, it was tragic news about two trains coming from Germany to Italy - one full of Italian soldiers infected with tuberculosis. Here Mara interrupted, she took my diary and wrote "Hi Gastone, Lea has to come with me to read the newspaper and talk" - Excuse me, I'll continue later. On the other trains there were pregnant girls sent back in those conditions! You can imagine how sad the news made us, and we Italians got up and left the room. We were certainly not in the mood to listen to music or songs. It's ghastly how we can think of a tomorrow with Germany as part of a European confederation, a country with such violence and evil. But then how can you think of a united Europe without Germany? Can eighty million people be destroyed? Tonight I spoke with Mr. De Cori. I also wanted Emma to participate in the discussion of these topics which we hold so much at heart. To be able to let Russia join in the confederacy and then follow its socialist movement, but it's not democracy and we know very little about life there. One should be there to understand - I'll try to read and learn more. I'm rather satisfied with myself. David never came, it's better this way. We went swimming with the girls at a very pretty place and we stuffed ourselves with apples, pears, berries, nuts, etc. I went to the bus stop and I found out that he escaped, he ran off to join the French partisans -Bravo! What courage! I admire him because it showed that he practiced what he preached - and not like so many others who talk and talk because it's fashionable.

August 28, 1944
I'm glad that my job gives me some free time to do what I want to do, but the sewing machine was more satisfying. My hands are chapped again, Emma is against this job - she says I'm growing squat. I even have muscles now from carrying weights. She showed me a picture of myself when I was 20, I had given you an enlargement of it. It seems that it's a different person from the one I see in the mirror now - my hair is straight and short making my face round like a moon. My face is also dark from the sun, I'm certainly not a cute figure anymore. I would like so much to be more graceful and feminine. Last night I walked Mara and Giuliana to the S. George, we sat on a bench where couples usually sit. We were all very quiet, each one wrapped in her own thoughts. I felt so sad, the evening was beautiful, one could see all the little villages along the lake all lit up as far as the Italian border, where the complete darkness and stillness gave you the chills: what was happening down there? And you Gastone, what were you doing at that particular moment. A great melancholy overcame me, I wondered if you could see me now if you could still find in me the qualities that once attracted me to you. I've changed so much in and out. I cried while I was faking a laugh, my friends who know me well pretended not to notice. We felt very close then; we hugged one another and continued our walk feeling among ourselves a stronger bond. We had such a long road ahead of us; I can't wait to start those courses this way I can feel that I am doing something useful.

August 30, 1944
Yesterday afternoon with a few hours at my disposal I rented a bicycle and went to Locarno. I hadn't been on a bike for so long, what a delicious sensation! What a beautiful road! I got there in half an hour and I went to see Silvia. She was very happy because she had received a letter from Elio. And me, nothing - is it possible that I should never hear from you! Now I can't even write because the mail service has been interrupted temporarily. I went to the Red Cross - they were very kind. I got soaking wet, I got caught in a sudden shower. I'm glad it didn't last too long so I was able to get back in half an hour. I was all alone, or rather I was with you, all the time busy having an animated conversation, we were so good together. Remember our beautiful walks to the Pineta and Tirrenia? Actually I'm happy with my work which lets me have these outings, those long hours spent on the machine were playing havoc with my imagination to the point of having obsessions. I was letting myself out of the place I actually was and I found myself thinking out loud. I think it won't be too long before it's all over, anyway! In the evening I went to see my little old ladies at the S. George who were very happy to see me, especially Mrs. Vigivani, Lina Schwartz's sister, she was so down and I succeeded in cheering her up. Lina told me that she was jealous because I was staying with her sister - they're so strange! Now I've gotten very close to Emma and we discuss very philosophical affairs. Now I'm into a German philosopher who is very obscure, but very interesting. Emma and Lina Schwartz are very enthusiastic about him, he has actually one of those minds that you could really sink into. He revolutionizes all ideas and embraces all possible and imaginable topics. There would be so much to read and learn if I had the time. Tomorrow Mamma and Emma will also receive their first (paycheck) salary.

September 1, 1944
Here we are in September! We got paid! I'm down to six francs. I'm upset to think that if I had stayed on the machine I'd receive eight. There's a negative side to everything. The day before yesterday I received a letter from David from Geneva. He apologized for not having shown up that Sunday, but he had to decide to leave to fight for this great ideal of his that we talked so much about - citizen of the world! He asks me if I approve - poor boy, I wish everyone would be as idealistic. And now the occasion has presented itself to act rather than stay inactive and to put to practice their ideas. I wish I could also leave. It was a brief and nice letter where he tells me the bare facts with much earnestness. I wrote back a few lines wishing him my best.
Last night Matilde Cassim wanted us all to get together and organize something - sing, pep rally, etc. I felt like a stranger. At one time I would have felt very enthusiastic and moved about it, but now I feel that it's put on not very spontaneous. Singing is lovely and emotional and discussions are useful if they're not imposed. Maybe it's because now my mind is taken up with greater ideals that surpass those of Zionism and even if I approve the

reasons for Zionism I don't feel I'm interested in it anymore. Maybe my friendship with Giuliana has influenced me and the vast horizon that I saw through David. I just don't feel at ease. In a few days I'll start this brief course and hopefully something really serious will come out of it.

September 3, 1944
It's been two days that I've felt a premonition that something different was going to happen that would wake me up from this sluggishness I have. I was mentioning this to Giuliana, the monotony of the lake, even if it's beautiful, it's always calm and it even makes me more nervous. Yesterday instead I spent some moments that I think I'll remember forever. At about 10 O'clock we heard sounds of a machine gun and cannons at a very close range. It was a day for leave so I was walking with my favorite group, Mara, Giuliana, Trudy. The shots continued so we got closer to the border to see if we could observe something . There were some Swiss soldiers with binoculars looking at the opposite side. I asked them if I could look too, and to my surprise I saw a boat coming toward us from the Italian bank. All excited, we watched the development of the escape, hoping that they would get across safely while the shots were flying close to the boat. We were sure they were Italians, but it turned out they were German guards from the border. They were escaping the partisans who had occupied Cannobio and were getting closer to the frontier. The Germans did not let the Italian guard who was with them on board the boat, so the Italians went to the partisans to tell them what had happened and they all started to shoot. You have no idea what I went through at that moment. First I was praying that they would get across safely and then that they would get shot dead. Damn them! The cowards! Two out of six were hit and wounded - one died, you could see the branches go up and down rapidly. Then a tow boat was coming from another part of the Italian bank and brought them to safety. The partisans continued to shoot for a while longer. What an emotional event! To know that the partisans were just a few steps away from us and not be able to greet them at the border! It was forbidden to do so, but I don't think I can resist the temptation to go to the border to see them. They've already put down the Italian flag! Today the consul of Locarno (whom I met at the exhibition) went to talk to them and he heard that Varese is also in their power. We're winning on all fronts! Outside of these events we had a beastly storm, thunder and lightning, rain, and fog, the lake is a menacing black spectacle and it's rough! I've never seen anything like it - it's like the end of the world, suitable for my state of mind. I spent a long time to contemplate such a spectacle and I was thinking how nature, like men, seems to be in a state of revolt and upheaval, everything seems to go around a vortex and it's impossible to emerge from it. Even my ideas are in turmoil, and I'm trying to find my way through all this entanglement, but it's difficult. Yesterday I had such a feeling of hatred towards people, I don't even know that I wished them dead. These people that were saved by just coming in here. These

are people with families that can think and love and yet are capable of causing so much grief to innocent victims. I would love to see their blood splashed as vengeance for all the horrors they've committed. And again I have that knot in the pit of my stomach at the thought of including Germany in the Confederation of Europe, helping her from the ruins, and being her equal. This innate hatred in us has to be stifled for the sake of peace, of equilibrium and mutual help among all people. Could we ever achieve this? Could these partisans, who suffered and fought more than anyone else because of them, conquer this hatred. They more than anyone else should have the right to decide. What a time we're going through, what emotional moments. They will never be forgotten in time, even if time will heal all wounds. And we are here - helpless and inactive spectators waiting for things to happen. I can't stand it anymore. My reason says to be patient, but my feelings tell me that as soon as I can I'll leave even if I have to escape. That evening a truck load of German refugees went by us - there were 38 of them - we couldn't get near them, we were told. What an effort it took not to get close to them and yell at their face what was inside of me. But the Swiss people did it for us screaming "murderers", "cowards"! Today on the radio I heard that the Germans are fleeing and dispersing on all fronts trying also to resist where they can. Today the view was just the opposite from yesterday - just as spectacular. Yesterday the rage of the elements, today, tranquility after the unburdening - a sudden tranquility - radiant sun - a clear horizon almost unrealistic. The green of the mountains almost seemed to be plastic against the radiant blue of the sky. The lake had bluish tints and was slightly rough, it resembled our sea when calm. Breathtaking! I went to the S. George with Emma and we had a nice snack of prosciutto. Everybody brought something and we had a good time. In the afternoon we went for apples. There were so many, the wind had broken a lot of branches and there were loads of them on the ground. We started to pick them and put them in our bags when I noticed that everyone was running away and I found myself confronted by a very angry man, woman, and children. I explained to them that I was only picking the ones that were on the ground, that they would have rotted, but they were furious saying that they were the owners and that I had to return the apples. And so half-heartedly I put all the apples back under the tree. At this point, the man felt sorry for me and told me I could have them, I gave some to the children who thanked me. The man smiled at me and told me I could go back and pick them any time I wanted, but not to say anything to the others otherwise they would strip all the trees. I promised and I left, a little annoyed with the fear that they knew that I was a refugee and they would notify the camp director. My friends then came out from behind a wall worried about me, the wretches who had left me all alone!

Yesterday morning, five minutes before the end of the work, Lina Ottolenghi (very pleasant gal) ran in all out of breath telling us that she heard that the gothic line had been broken down. We were

all euphoric with joy and started to talk all at once. The director, Ms. Stoz, comes in all upset and gave us an extra hour of work for getting so out of hand. What a mean person - she could have imagined what we were feeling. Then she didn't want to eat with us and she locked herself in her room. Luckily that night she got over it and she was very pleasant. My roommate came in and gave me an apple - very kind of her, at times the first impression can be all wrong. What a night! I don't want to think of anything. All day nature has offered so many of its splendid different aspects. Right now it's gorgeous, the moon is of a very distinct color reflecting its fullness on the lake. It reminds me of that night at Colle Montanino when we were waiting to see the eclipse. In a few days we'll celebrate Kippur - I'll celebrate it for the memory, my dear Gastone, when we were together in Livorno walking along the sea between the critical hours of twelve and two. Will we ever do it again? I promised myself not to revert to my memories anymore, but everything always comes back to my mind - everything that pertains to you, so far and yet always near to me. The memories choke me, I try to chase them away, but they get the best of me. They dim my sight and they make me cry from feeling so nostalgic, wishing desperately that you were with me. Why aren't you with me on this balcony, at least together for one evening, this one which is so splendid - next to me in this stillness with our thoughts in unison and our hearts beating at the sound of Beethoven's Claire de Lune -"Oh Lea" I tell myself don't get too sentimental, I won't re-read these lines otherwise I'll get angry, but it's harder than it seems even if I try very hard.

September 4, 1944
This morning while I was down at the beach with my book "Moscow" I see a great to-do of boats on the lake going up and down. I asked Mr. Leber who was there with me and he tells me that they're partisans coming to Switzerland to get provisions. The customs officials at the border luckily looked the other way. Too bad we're on the other bank of the lake. I would love to talk to them, ask if they need me, if I could go with them. I'd love to do something crazy like that - to swim across over to them, and then?.. From Cannobio how can I come to you, Gastone? And what will you think of this young lady so different from the one you left? But how can I do it? There's still a large occupied zone, but I hope just for a short while, the news I hear is good. I'm happy - I feel that soon I'll be with you. Wait for me, you know that soon as I can I'll join you. I haven't had any news about you from the Red Cross - I lost all my confidence. I'll probably see you before. Buy love, good night - also tonight the full moon lights up all the lake in a magnificent splendor. See you soon my love!

September 7, 1944
Gastone, I'm in such a struggle! It would be so easy to get to the other side! And then? I have to think this out clearly. It's my wish to realize my principles that's pushing me and my enthusiasm

is what hides my crazy wish to join you. I think they're both strong forces, but between the two of them the stronger one is the one concerning you. If I get to Cannobbio will there be means of communication or will I be out of everything - would I be a burden rather than an asset? What also holds me back is that I heard that the partisans don't like young people that want to join them. I understand their reason - they've risked their lives all along and now that it's close to the end they want to wallow in the well deserved glory - they would have to waste time teaching everything to such people. There are some bands that are being organized from here, but they don't want women. I don't know what to do - I'm a refugee not out of choice but because I had to. Even the course I was supposed to attend fizzled out, we couldn't get permits to go. This upset me very much. Even if I keep very busy both during the day and during my free time, I still need to do, act, and know more. I spoke at length with Lina Schwartz about the philosophical revolutionary movement, to combine material work with the intellectual to make it side by side. This should be our job. Our mind is capable to realize even the most inexplicable theories - without recurring to religion and God. We have to broaden our limited horizons, believe and trust in our minds.

The great friendship to Mara and Giuliana is of great comfort to me, it's sincere and spontaneous, they call us the "international trio". True friendship is so beautiful. For example, yesterday while we were at the dishes, the boss tells me to get some wood, but Giuliana said right away that she would go instead because I wasn't feeling well. I was very touched, even if it was something unimportant it was beautiful. Gastone, if I take a look at myself - inside and out my dreams for the future and then I think of the ones I used to have before; what a contrast! I felt that very strongly yesterday - we were dead tired and we were resting on Giuliana's bed, Yolanda Baviera - another roommate came in, she's sweet, married but no tact, she has lots of money and a lot of nice things and shows them off too, she would ask our advice on how much she should get from the bank for an item of clothing for example - So she came in today and shows us a beautiful light blue long robe with matching slippers. It really fit her to a tee, "what would Mario say" she said with her radiant eyes. I look at her, she's beautiful, refined, elegant, what I used to want to be to lead a comfortable and simple life. But I haven't been thinking of these things anymore, I wear clothes that are not mine and don't bother to match shoes and bags - I really never cared that much before either, but you had influenced me somewhat to take pride in my clothes and how I looked. Now I don't think of these things at all. In the future I'd like to maintain these same ideas, have only the necessary clothes, think only of our family, but also work for others, be well organized like in a camp, have a social life and have our children grow up the same as everybody else. Looking at that dress old thoughts and dreams resurfaced to my mind, not out of envy, but for a nostalgic yearning for my long ago dreams, unfortunately now shattered like a broken doll in the hands of a

disappointed child who had loved to play with it for such a long time and then realized that everything was a fake just like those dreams. I'm glad that the enchantment is broken, it was painful but now I can face reality.

September 8, 1944
I went for a beautiful bike ride with Giuliana. We went as far as Locarno where I saw Silvia deeper into her problems as ever. The weather was beautiful and we enjoyed it to the fullest and what's more is that the person who rented us the bike liked us and he charde us for three hours instead of four and a half. As soon as we got back we received the bad news that Connobbio had been reoccupied - but by the Germans. What a shame! I can't think of those infamous people! We saw a huge boat of partisans that succeeded in escaping here. Something also happened in Mezzovico, in the male camp. They admitted a group of German soldiers to go through it. The refugees couldn't contain themselves and started to yell and throw rocks at them. As punishment they were transferred to another camp inland. I don't know how many of them, some of the husbands of ladies who are here and they're desperate now because they can't see nor communicate with one another. Among them there's our friend Trudy, and she's very grieved at this. I hope all this will soon be over, if I had been foolish enough to escape I would really have found myself in real trouble. Right now we have to be patient and wait till all of Italy is freed. But when?

September 12, 1944
What a day it was yesterday! We had already found out that some women and children who had escaped from the bordering towns as soon as the Germans had gone back, had been taken and then sent back. Yesterday morning when I was with Giuliana we saw our director accompany a woman to the infirmary. A Swiss soldier who had been following them asked the woman if she really couldn't walk. She was in a pitiful state and unable to move one step. She had escaped with her sister and nephews who were upstairs waiting. I approached her, her face had all the sufferings of a terrible ordeal. I ran upstairs to my room and took what little I had of my things and made a package for her. I felt bad that I couldn't do more, but I don't have too much. I went downstairs and she was gone. I wanted to run after her outside, but Stoz forbade me so I asked a little boy to catch up to her and give her my package. I felt so bad at the thought that they were bringing her back to the border. At dinner time we saw a parade of people being brought back at the border - about thirty very sad looking women and children. They looked like they were going to the slaughter. In fact what other fate are they facing? A priest was accompanying them to town and was going to try to intercede for them. But what hope did they have? They were families of partisans whose husbands had taken to the bush and cut the hair of those who had cooperated with the Germans and now they were ready for revenge. What frightened faces! I couldn't stand to watch them. A sadness

overcame me to see those poor people -refugees like us with their little bundles. I'll never forget those terrible hours waiting to find out if we were going to be accepted. I felt a lump in my throat and a weigOht in my heart that I wanted to join them. The gong rang, but with what heart could I go to dinner when I knew the horror that awaited those poor people. I couldn't even eat a bite. We pleaded for those people with the director to do something for them, so she sent Stiffel to the authorities in Bellinzona. In the meantime, the workers of a nearby plant and other people blocked the way so that those poor people could not pass. It was people that they knew, maybe even relatives. Stoz also ran over to them asking the people to take some of them in, but they rebelled against us saying that we should take them all in at the hotel instead of us who are leading the good life anyway. I couldn't blame them, it's true that some spend all day in the cafes all made up and provocative in pants and often going to dance halls. So they're very prejudiced against us. Finally around 5:00 P.M. the order came in that they could stay. A happy Stoz takes them herself to the hotel and gives them food and sends them to sleep in the flextuber temporarily while waiting for further orders. She asked us to stay away and have no contacts with them, but we were very happy with this solution. We were very grateful to the director who had shown so much understanding and this made us appreciate and overlook the little things that at times annoyed us about her. We thanked her and gave up on the concert, we were no longer in the mood after such an emotional day. We'll try not to attract too much attention of the town's people. To think that these poor refugees are only a minority to so many more who are still in grave danger.

September 18, 1944
Today is Roschaschana and only you Gastone can understand what I'm going through on this holy day. Last night we had a beautiful ceremony. The director was a completely understanding and sensitive individual. She had everything prepared with exquisite taste, flowers, the tables beautifully laid out. It was a very simple ceremony, but which moved me very much.I could see you at our temple with your Taled on your shoulders, at your usual place and my father with his prayer book and I couldn't stand it any more. I felt so lost and alone, lately I had fantasized about new ideas and principles. I felt more than ever attached to my traditions - to our rites. I know it's pure sentimentalism, but I feel deeply Jewish and I can understand how absurd it is to think of only one religion for everybody when one feels so attached to one's traditions and form. After the ceremony I wanted to be by myself on the terrace to be with you, my love. I was looking at those black mountains in Italy and thought of you there beyond them. I wondered how you were spending these hours. Were you in tune with my thoughts? The terrible agony of my soul for such too long a distance. Did you feel your Pusse embracing you as hard as possible to unload all her pains on your strong shoulders? Emma then joined me to shake me from my darkness. She always was able

to read my thoughts. She has gone down since her arrival from Aquarossa. This is not a life for her, even if she only works half a day, but she needs a lot of peace and quiet. Amedeo came on leave for a couple of days. I hardly recognized him, he had a beard and moustache. He looks older, but well, altogether a different type - more ascetic and serious, almost intimidating. Giuliana is very nervous, she's still in love with him. I went to sleep with her since she had a spare bed, I had to give mine up for a refugee from Canobbio. All night she wanted to stay in my bed and talk. I was tired, but I tried to comfort her, she's a good girl and I feel sorry for her. Mara went on leave to Lugano to see her family. Maybe she'll get to join them with our deep sorrow since we've become very attached to her. These days I went back to the S. George with her and she was so happy to have me with her again. She also confided her pains to me and she's sad to leave me to join her family. I'm spending a very relaxed time, all those ideas that had me hoping and dreaming are going up in smoke. I feel that I was too impulsive and my enthusiasm took the best of me and now I'm depressed because I see that we're not getting anything accomplished. I want to react differently, I'll ask to go back to the sewing machine. Now we can't go swimming anyway - it's too cold and my hands are getting ruined being in the dish water all the time. But my boss doesn't want me to leave. We'll see who's going to win. We still have those refugees staying with us, if I think of the day they arrived! Now everything is back to normal, they're happy that they have something to eat, a place to sleep, and some clothes on their backs - they're poor country people. I have my hopes restored, a letter from the Committee Head arrived announcing that the courses will start in mid October. First there will be some prepatory lectures in Zurich and me or Mara can go. It's not possible for both of us to go, I'm sorry we'll get separated. We'll see what can be done, but I'm glad they got moving again. Emma went on leave to Lugano. Next time I'll go with Mamma, but it doesn't excite me anymore as it did the first time I went with Mara. Saturday Silvia came with Paolo and the Pastor's son, with whom I got stuck because she wanted me to speak Italian to him and keep him company. We took a walk, but he didn't know anything. This morning I went to the services, but I came away because of a bad headache. It was the Sefer and they played the schofar beautiful things but sad because they remind me of other times. I'll fast and then I'll walk with you, Gastone, along the lake like we used to along the sea. Will those times return? Who knows, this lake so gray gives me a terrible sadness, it unnerves me, I'd like to slap it for its immobility. It's so monotonous, I'd like to see something different and impossible. I think that right now if I'd see the mountains turn around I wouldn't be surprised. Bye love, the gong is sounding and I'm finally going to eat. They've prepared a good meal, as you can see I'm always thinking of very prosaic things. I send you my blessings with all my heart. I wish you all the best first, and second that my dream of seeing you soon will come true because I can't stand it anymore.

September 21, 1944
Once upon a time there was a very happy girl who lived happily near her fiance. Her life existed solely for him, her thoughts were a reflection of his thoughts. But all of a sudden Crack! ... the whirl of events tore her away from him, sweeping her away in its vortex. Up to now she's been able to fight and cope with all that has happened to her. She's made new experiences and new ideas, acquiring along the way her own personality. Her thoughts however are always towards him who is still her only reason for living; but as time passes, there's only a memory of happy times. Almost unreal, his figure is idealized and at times is so blurred that a very great effort is needed on her part to make it live again in her mind. She has a photograph with her, it's true, which she often looks at, but it's only a far away image of long gone days. But ... tonight while I was out arm in arm with Mara and Giuliana talking about altogether different things, all of a sudden I had an apparition of Gastone in the flesh; you were exactly the same as when I left you with your usual raincoat all buttoned up and your brown striped suit under it, a cigarette in your hand and your cheerful smile. I took your arm and held it very tight with both my hands and I felt your dear arm under the creases of the raincoat. I tried to keep my pace with yours, as always - remember? and how I could see your wavy black hair with that unruly lock on your forehead. And now at this very moment I'm imagining that I'm caressing you, I'm kissing your eyes and I kiss you...with my eyes, remember? Remember...everything is so confused, so muddled in this instant of reality when I'm finally in your presence. I see you clearly now - so many things to tell you - where to start? But before I start I want to wait in silence , wait, let's walk together again like we used to - Old times are back, I'm so radiant with happiness being here next to you. Be patient, let's enjoy this bliss in silence, we have the rest of our life to talk, don't break the spell, wait a little longer, don't go away, a little while longer, can't you see how ecstatic I am? Can't you see that my emotion is such that I can't even express my joy. But why, as you're sweetly trying to get away from my grip, are you telling me to wait a little while longer, not much and you leave, smiling to try to cheer me up. No, I'm not crying, I'm also smiling to please you, while big fat tears are falling down my cheeks...

September 29, 1944
This morning I feel better, I feel more hopeful and trusting in the future. I started again my usual job after a few days of leave and holidays. It's the second leave that I take. I was very excited at the first one, for the novelty. This time I was less cheerful, but I was glad to take a trip, hoping that some unexpected event would happen, something different than the life I lead here. So, Saturday the 23rd I left with Giuliana for Locarno. I found Silvia in her usual bustle, busy with her landlady, so I understood that I couldn't sleep at her house, so with Giuliana we went to the "Home for the protection of lonely young women" where we took a

very nice room, clean but smallish, but very lovely and fresh - soft beds, quilts, bedspread and curtains of flowered cotton which gave a very cheerful young atmosphere to the room, easy chair and table. How great to live in such a pretty room! We talked for a long time while we were nestled under the covers, fantasizing on the past, present, and future. But we were actually a little homesick for the Grand Hotel which in truth represents our home, our everyday life. It's good though to get away for a day or so, to visit one's family, but I don't feel as close to them anymore. For instance, I enjoy being with Silvia and I understand her problems, and she's always happy to see me. I spend many a pleasant hours talking to her telling her what goes on at camp, but these are superficial things, I can't open up my heart to her, I can't discuss my ideas nor my interior life. It's easier for me to do that with my friends when we get together after work. I feel that I prefer life at camp to being free, even considering the negative aspects of the discipline and work. But there are the positive aspects also: meeting so many interesting people and getting a taste of what the real life is like, and we were wondering if also in the future we would someday miss our life on camp. We wanted now to do something, get a move on ourselves - go to a cafe, movie, or dancing, but we had to be back at 9:30. Maybe at that moment I was ready to do something foolish. On Sunday we wanted to see the movie "The Great Rain", but it was starting too late and we would have missed our train for Lugano, so we didn't go. We went to the Majestic - great depression! New faces, departures, bad food, beds with no sheets - I was glad to see Franca and the children, she's a little lonely. Nellina is a real love, a little butterball, lively and chubby enough to eat. I spent two nice days taking Umberto around the city. I had enough money with me and stamps for chocolate, so I went overboard with myself and I even bought trivial things that I couldn't live without like lipstick, powder, perfume, etc. It's been so long since I've indulged in similar things. I called on some acquaintances - the Berlinguers who gave me so many nice things, I gave them a stuffed animal which I made for their child, and she asked me to make more which she would try to sell them. In a window I saw a pair of calf casual shoes, I was sure you would have liked them very much - they were not that expensive either - 19 francs. So I went in to try them on, they fit me great but... I didn't have any money so I told them I would send them both money and stamps. I didn't have either one so what could I do? I then felt guilty that I spent so much money on such futile items. It's a good thing that Mrs. de Martino gave me some stamps. So between that and my salary I was able to send it all and now I'm waiting for the shoes which I will save for Italy because I don't think I will find any like those there. I even borrowed from my salary, so now for a while I'll receive half pay. Our return trip was nice, I pretended to be a tourist and gave myself some airs. Today I started to work with some merriment. I was so glad to see all my friends and at night we had some good laughs in their room where they had the sign: No.3824 - Lea! We draped a black ribbon around

the door so no one could see the light through it. When we get together at night to talk in someone's room I feel like I'm at a boarding school, a little carefree. We all agreed to form a corporation to make and sell as many stuffed animals as possible. We'll make lots of money. Snow is already on the mountain tops, but a beautiful sun is radiating around the lake and I'm happy because we'll soon go back.

October 2, 1944
I'm so ecstatic, I feel like a great woman! I received the invitation for Zurig. I'll leave on the fourteenth and for one week I'll see new places, the middle of Switzerland, I'll discuss serious problems and then off to Italy - Hurray! I had given up hope. When I was in Lugano I talked to the attorney Testa about renouncing my place in favor of Mara Coen, who had a better reason to go since her father is in a hospital in Zurig with possible cancer. (But it was a false alarm) He was disappointed but said he would try to include me in too. There were only thirty places and I'm glad I can go with Mara. I'm sorry for Giuliana who was not included - that breaks up our trio. I wrote to Testa insisting also for Giuliana and if Cassim succeeded to go and not Giuliana I would get very angry and upset. We'll see, I went to Locarno from Saturday until Monday morning. I was afraid they would find out because you can't sleep out without a permit, but I made it! I'm glad I got away with it, I didn't spend anything because I had with me the leave ticket from the last time that had not been punched. Silvia was moving, this way I was able to help her. Now she lives downtown and is very happy because she's independent while before she didn't get along with Mrs. Beffa who was fond of me because one time I read her the cards and it came true. Now she says I'm a witch. To think that I had made everything up. I hope Silvia will be happier now- she's so lonely, poor girl, especially in the long evening hours, she's so attached to Paolo. She doesn't even have a radio, but it looks like Mamma will soon be set free and she could stay with her. We strolled around and shopped. It had been so long, so many good things in stores without lines. I spent some very pleasant hours with Silvia, I thought I was on leave again. I have so many things to do and think about to get ready for my trip, to make stuffed animals (I remember a puppy that Gastone's mother made for me) things for Silvia, Paolo, Franca, and the children, lessons, I just don't have any time to waste. I should also read some books, but I have to postpone that for the moment. Today Anna came to see us and she's very upset to be living up there and filled in the application to come here. I hope so for her sake, but she's still the same nut and I think it would be the end of our peace and quiet. I'm glad that my life is full and active. I have so many ideas that I've somewhat altered and modified after profound reflections and I feel more balanced and reasonable. I seem to see things more clearly. I dreamed about you, Gastone, maybe because in Locarno I had seen some young people playing tennis. I saw you in my dream playing, dressed in your shorts and running, swinging your racket, and I was admiring your

dexterity. Then we went back home, me sitting on the bar of your bike and you were peddling away. I was so happy, too bad when I woke up I realized it was only a dream. As I told you on the 27th I fasted according to all the rules and regulations, and then I walked with you along the lake, but then I felt so weak. I stretched out on the bed, but instead of praying I thought of very profane things, but I was not at all sorry I did. Then I went down to eat - they had prepared an excellent dinner. In the morning I went to my friend's room and we stayed in bed. Everything went well - and how did you spend it? Next year I'm sure we'll spend it together, right? Bye now my love, I'm very sleepy. Good night.

October 9, 1944
Hurray! I've found extra work. I had sent a stuffed dog as a present to Mrs. de Martino's child and she showed it to some other ladies. One of them who has a shop has asked me if I could make some for her and how much, etc., etc. In Locarno Silvia had shown the duck I had made for Paolo and again I got some orders from there so I'm very very busy making animals. Mrs. de Martino is a real treasure. I told Mara and Gabriella about the orders and we formed a company - even division of the profits. We work till late at night laughing like crazy. Today I made a little lady that I fantasized. She came out very well and everyone complimented me. I'll try to market her - all you need is to have an original idea and you have something very pretty. They also asked me if I knew how to adorn dolls and of course I said yes. For now the net profit for every animal is Fr. 1.50, but later on if things go well we could raise the selling price and that would be enough since we make on the average one or two a day. I'm so happy - it's a secret and no one must ever know. I'm only telling you, Gastone, in one ear. I'm happy for this, but I see that another winter in Switzerland is approaching and I'm so apprehensive. I have to be with you within the end of the year otherwise I'll go crazy! Yesterday we took a beautiful walk in the woods to pick chestnuts and with the two Rietti we got as far as the border in the mountains. There was a sign "Stop - do not go beyond" but I had to take at least ten paces beyond the border. Nearby we met master Conti Rossini, all out of breath and with a mysterious air he told us that he was waiting for night to fall to go across and join the partisans. I couldn't take him seriously with that dumbstruck face asking me tragically "You think I'll die?" I don't know what kept me from bursting out laughing at his face, poor guy, he's really risking his life, but he's so funny. He said that night they were going to try again to recapture Cannobbio - I hope so!

Mamma is on leave. The girl who shares our room has left so there's only me and Emma and it's so wonderful to have such a beautiful room to ourselves, all clean and in order. It's so nice at night to read and work by ourselves, exchanging ideas and thoughts of the day. Now I'm reading "The woods of love" by Morgan, it's so beautiful and it fascinates me. I wish I could read all the time, but I can't, I have many other urgent things to

do. It's a book that keeps one company, I enjoy it because it's profound, but not too deep and it probes into some of my philosophical and spiritual ideas. Now I'll go to bed under this warm quilt and I allow myself a half hour of this inspiring reading - the best moments of my day. Then I'll turn off the lights and before I fall asleep I'll think of you, Gastone, as I always do, of the times together, so distant now. The other night I dreamed that I had gone back to Italy and was about to see you, but I was so excited that I stopped to get ready a little at a time. I couldn't decide how I was going to face such a long waited moment. I kept asking myself if you would still like me. Then with my heart beating a mile a minute, I came to your house. You were wearing a white shirt and your blue summer slacks. You came towards me and... the alarm went off and it didn't even give me the chance to enjoy your embrace. What a sweet sensation it would have been, all I needed was one more minute. I think that reality will be altogether different, I wonder in what circumstances we'll see each other, but I don't think I'll waste any time to get into your arms, beautiful or ugly you have to accept me the way I am at any cost otherwise I won't be responsible for my actions. Good night my love, it's been raining all day, and now the days are gray and endless and more melancholy than ever. I'm reliving what we went through during these days last year.

October 14, 1944
I received the formal invitation of the "Mosli" near Zurich, great attorney, Testa, he succeeded, and Mara and Giuliana will come also. I'm very happy about that, I would have been sorry if one of us would have been excluded. So Tuesday, the 17th departure! We won't come back till the following Monday. We'll be able to see Zurich and above all talk with intelligent people concerning the problems that we have had so much at heart for such a long time. After Zurich we have to hike for two hours with our knapsack on our backs. I can't wait, the three of us are very thrilled with the preparations. We're exchanging clothes and sundries and we consult on what to bring. We think we're dreaming! After this they'll also give a course on practice and we'll also take that. I'm euphoric! Well.. I was very much so when we got the news the other day. Today instead I'm sad, yesterday we said goodbye to our director, Stoz, who has been so very nice till the end. There had been a beautiful party held in Ascona, show and dancing, but instead I went to see Silvia and I had heard horrendous news on the partisans, on the disaster in Domodossola and Val d'Ossola. So many women and children fleeing desperately. And Elio was transferred - I didn't want Silvia to read my fears, that of a deportation, there's not much hope. I was so terribly depressed when I said goodbye to Silvia. I didn't feel like going to the party, but I wanted to go back home from Ascona with my friends because in the dark and with no bus I couldn't do it alone. Going near Ascona in the dark I got lost near the cemetery, then I got to the theater near the end of the show, maybe it wasn't bad but it was all in German. After that there was the dance, but I told my

friends that I didn't feel like it and that I would take the last bus to Brissago. Guiliana, in particular, did not agree with this at first, but then she decided to come away with us. Our escorts were disappointed, they had come there ready to invite us! They later told us that it was a beautiful and successful dance and that Stoz was there and she danced too, but I was not in the mood to have a good time.

Now I am working on a pair of gloves for a lady in Locarno - but what a job for just 2 francs. But it all counts and I want to make a little extra. Anna has been transferred to Rovio. How strange, we were there last year around this time -but it's for the best. Emma will get less angry. We'll see her anyway on leaves, it's not that far and I think she'll be fine there. I've already taken for granted that the war will end before the end of the year. I have no more patients, I also blame the allies for what is happening to these poor people because of them and what happened to Varsavia because of the Russians. But I'm trying to think of something else. Gino luckily was transferred closer to Franca, in a camp on the Ticino, but Franca from the Majestic is now at the Casa d'Italia which is not so ideal for children. I hope they send her to a nice place like Rovio. Stoz likes us and she approves us getting involved in something that will help after the war and she promised to try to let us go to Geneva where there are some serious courses on this subject. We'll see. Now I'll get back to my work. I hope I get over this nervous state - I have to react. At the Kursaal there's "A Voice in the Tempest" playing. I remember that you Gastone liked it very much and you wanted to take me, but I'm broke and have to miss it. I don't know how I'll manage in Zurig without anything even if they pay for our trip - I could use some money. I received the shoes and I'm very satisfied with them. I've sacrificed for them, but they're worth it.

October 16, 1944
Tomorrow morning we leave! We're scurrying with the preparations. The trio is bubbling with agitation. The three of us took a bath, splashing one another amidst laughter and merriment. Mara was so excited that she fell down the stairs breaking a pitcher and her knee. She has to leave limping, I hope it'll be all right. Tomorrow at this time we'll be there. Oh my God, how wonderful! Today we received 5.70 Francs for the animals, my first earning from the "company". We divided it equally and we bought two pastries to celebrate. Good night Gastone, as usual you're here with me always. I'll tell you everything later, bye!

November 1,1944
I'm late in writing not having had the time and I confess I also didn't feel like it. I thought I'd come back from "Mosli" with another state of mind. I don't want to insinuate that I was disappointed for the course and for the unforgettable days I spent there. The trip was fun, we were excited and happy, anxious and full of enthusiasm. At Bellinzona we changed trains and we met the

other participants. New faces, few young people - the only ones we knew: Testa and Luzzatto who introduced us very quickly. Our group from Brissago kept exchanging meaningful glances, all we did the whole time was eat. I was anxious to pass the Gottard and I was afraid the descriptions I had heard were going to be disappointing. Instead, what a marvelous impression at the exit of the tunnel. Before entering the tunnel, the last town was Airolo - still Ticino with still Italian signs and characteristics. It had also been raining. On the other side bright sunshine scintillating on the snowy mountain tops, landscapes typically Swiss, little houses that looked like toys or children's constructions, green meadows, immense valleys, pointed bell towers, stupendous colored woods ranging from deep green to yellow and bright red gorges and falls - one spectacle in front of another in front of our enchanted eyes. I was trying to absorb as much as possible, to imprint in my mind and in my eyes as many scenes as possible. We were running from one window to another screaming with joy and awe, we didn't want to miss any part of that enchanted spectacle. That's when I started to get annoyed at Giuliana's behavior. All of a sudden she left us with a disgusted look for our behavior, a little provincial you could say! The train went around the mountain so that the little town that seemed to be at the bottom of the valley, was now on top. The tunnel took only fifteen minutes to cross, while I thought it would have taken longer since it's so long.

We started our first connections. Mr. Pirani, chubby with a belly, offered us roasted chestnuts and everyone shared what they had brought and that's how we started to get friendly. Testa was running from one compartment to the other to make sure that everything was proceeding well. We arrived in Zurig at 1:00 P.M. - big active station, we left our suitcases in storage at the station so we could roam around free. We only had one hour to see a little of the city and then to the Mosli. We five with a friend of Ruth's, who was acting as guide, wandered around the main street in front of the station. Banesstrass, it's the first big foreign city that I've ever seen. I have a strange feeling! Big impressive buildings - different from our architecture - not as harmonious as ours. Quick glances at the store windows, full of every God knows what. We walk quickly through the street and we arrive at a bridge where one can have a beautiful view of the lake and of the River Lima - Breathtaking - we name it the Bridge of the Pastry because we ate a delicious pastry there offered by Ruth's friend. We ran back to the station to pick up our luggage then we took a trolley and we met the others at the foot of the slope. We started our hike, at the start the slope is rather steep and at a certain point I was boiling hot with my fur on and my temples were beating furiously, but I didn't want to show the others that I was tired and I proceeded with energy unitl halfway when everybody stopped for a brief pause. The slope got better afterwards and I got used to the hike. The scenery is beautiful and as we go up we see Zurig at our feet like a myriad of houses, I never saw such crowded hills. We got in at a very thick forest and came out on a

street with a very elegant chalet. We go in, everything is so clean and fresh, a splendid kitchen and delicious sweets we can't resist the temptation, as usual. So we sit and with a sated aura we start our hike again. At a certain point we interrupt the road and go into the woods taking a narrow path we go down the valley. It's getting dark, the woods have spellbound shadows and reflections, brooks and strange bridges follow one another. Giuliana is in front of me, there's a lot of mud on the ground, and she starts with coquettish gestures to call for help to the guy next to her and he very gentleman like gives her his hand. At a certain point, I really felt like I was slipping and falling. I lost my balance and I wound up in a mud hole knapsack and all, but I don't want to call for help and I manage on my own. I'm too angry to imitate Giuliana's affections. We walk a while until, like in fairy tales, we see a light very far away, and that's our shelter. We finally got there - over a lake or pool whatever it is, the "Mosli" at the door, we were asked to remove our shoes and put on our slippers. We go in: there's a warm and welcoming room, that's the one where we will eat and have our lectures, since it's the largest. Upstairs there are two rooms, one for the women and one for the men each divided in double bunks. We four run for the bottom four bunks and start making our beds. Downstairs there's the kitchen and bath with shower. Everything is clean, hospitable and rustic but comfortable and well organized. There's a huge Majolica stove on one corner with a seat around it with a light overhead to read or work. That will become our favorite corner Gastone, where I'll dream of sitting there with you one day. I have a postcard that I'll show you, I'm sure you'll like it (the stove reminds me of one we had in Livorno in the sitting room when I was a child).

An excellent dinner refreshed our bodies and spirits (Italian style spaghetti) prepared by two good cooks from Zurich - fat and plain. The purpose of this meeting was to get to know one another, and for us young ones, to learn what the socialistic spirit is all about. That same night Mrs. Kagi, the president of the committee, showed us briefly the work done in Switzerland and in foreign countries by the work committee. Through a movie she showed us the help given to Spain in aiding the children. It was very interesting and she spoke in a very simple and clear French so that we had no problem in understanding. After a refreshing bath, we went to bed even with more enthusiasm than before. Among the participants, I was most impressed with Ruth Zippel, a young girl of 19 but mature and intelligent, and her friend Ada, a gym teacher boyish looking, tall and stocky and very pleasant. In the morning after a hearty breakfast we started our discussions on what we had seen the night before. Many asked some questions that raised various debates but everything was conducted with calm and order, and I liked Luzzatto who was acting as moderator and was trying to contain the discussion within the basic theme and yet leaving everyone free to express his opinion (I took notes on behalf of everybody on what the discussions were about). Many times I was tempted to raise my hand to participate, but I didn't dare, I wanted first to learn

what it was all about by listening to the others. But at one point the discussion was exactly on the subject that we had talked about for such a long time and I wanted to raise my hand, I whispered this to Giuliana who was sitting next to me and she took the floor and expressed very distinctly, I must say, and clearly what I felt. Luzzatto and the others admired and appreciated what Giuliana had said and from there Luzatto closed the argument with a very interesting point which made me very happy because it coincided with what I had been thinking all along. I tried to get eye contact with Giuliana, but she was not with me. She was feeling very proud of herself for being the center of attraction. Then I started to think that I had been right with my original impression of her that she was a selfish and egocentric exhibitionist. Too bad, from that moment I felt a strong detachment from her, she who feels so superior! I must confess that I suffered from this because I thought that our friendship would have been above this pettiness and be more solid. I'm not jealous nor envious, I just feel like I'm undergoing another disappointment, the same as the one with Matilde Cassim. In the afternoon we continued, on a louder scale, the morning discussions and at night we went out. Even during our evening walk Giuliana's behavior continued to bother me, so I was rude to her and I went ahead by myself. I wound up getting lost, but I wound up at the chalet and the beautiful view made me forget everything. I isolated myself to better enjoy the spectacular scenery of the myriad of multicolor lights reflecting on the lake blending with the real ones. I was all alone with the entire universe! They called me several times to bring me back to reality. Inside the chalet was beautiful, but not as nice as the previous one. We had a drink and went back.

November 7, 1944
I interrupted my story of the Mosli, I had a lot of things to say these days, but I don't feel like expressing them on paper, I want to keep them to myself. I have a knot in my throat as I'm reliving day by day the fatal days of last year at this time. It was in these days a year ago that my fate was decided. Was it fatalism? I don't believe in these things. We make our own destiny, the circumstances could be fatal, but our will decides. I can't take it anymore. I can't believe that one year has gone by since these unforgettable days. What happened and every event are fixed and are constantly present in my mind, but your person Gastone is like a ghost - a spirit that disappears from me all the time and I can't catch it. Why?

November 15, 1944
I'm not able to write anymore, nor think or act. I feel like a nonentity - a robot that moves by inertia, with no will and what's worse with no wishes. I'm indifferent to everything. I'm as depressed as ever, I think I need a strong shock, I'm scared of myself. I'm even indifferent about you, Gastone, you were my only hope! I don't feel like going out anymore or work. I do the least that I can and unwillingly too. Yesterday I forced myself to go

out alone a beautiful view was surrounding me - the landscape covered with snow was giving the town a surreal atmosphere - did I realize it was snowing? No, I don't think I cared. The cold air woke me up and I opened my eyes to the world and I asked myself what am I doing, who am I, why am I living? I was on the bridge, the falls were rushing under me and I could understand how one could think of suicide without a valid special reason, but for a simple whim of one's mind. Don't be afraid, I'm neither weak or that brave to think of that, I only made some personal considerations. Why (I asked myself) at that moment didn't you materialize like you used to when my hopes were at their highest, but now even these hopes have abandoned me. I waited every day for the mail always hoping in vain and my life continues in its apathy. I feel morally and physically weak and this brings me down. I don't have the strength to fight back. I don't have my usual balance, my mind wanders and I act like a sleepwalker. I'm always distracted and absent. I can't seem to follow even the simplest conversations and I forget everything. Sometimes I go up the stairs to my room and when I get there I forgot why I had gone, so I look around, I touch familiar objects with useless gestures forcing myself to remember - but nothing. Poor Lea, try to come out of it - but I can't, I have a constant buzzing in my ears. That's it, I don't want to think of anything anymore. But I've been trying to fight it for the past three weeks, but I can't, tonight I feel a little more alive, a little more calm, I'm trying to make a schedule for myself, but I don't want to overdo it on silly things, for a job that pays only a few cents - it's not worth it. Today while I was at the dinner table I got a letter from Silvia which tells me of a letter from Italy. I rushed through the lines and at a certain point she says that she's transcribing a letter from Gastone. I jump off the chair, the lines dance before my eyes. I scan her letter in every direction... no letter from Gastone! A dive! An instant of intense joy, a breathless search, and then nothing, a plunge into darkness! That terrible disappointment hurt me so much, but the shock was good for me in a sense. It revived in me your nearness again, I got you again! It's as if you had escaped and now you're back near me again. I'm beginning to gain my hopes. Gastone, why don't you try sending me a message? Here everyone sooner or later has received mail. I'm the only one in the dark. I know now for sure that you're safe and sound and that's what's important and should satisfy me, it's true - and that's what has kept me going and that you're still thinking of your poor Pusse. We even got a telegram from America, the first one that we received directly, good news, I was so happy, I wonder how they worry about us over there. I'm also glad I found the Giuliana of before. I was sick because of our cooling relationship - it was not as sincere as before - there was a barricade between us. FRIENDSHIP - sacred word - rare to find the true one and so common on the lips. I think I found it again in Mara, I say think because you'll never know. I've lost any absolute conviction in things. A woman is not complete unless she has her (Gastone) to give herself to. Life is beautiful and more serene when she has an

activity, believes in an ideal, and has a true friendship which is the most solid comfort, which fills in most of what is lacking in her life. Lately I thought that I was being disappointed also in this and I suffered from it, and Sunday evening I talked about it openly with Giuliana and we wound up in each others arms even closer to one another and felt the joy of having found one another again.

Now I feel like going back about a month (already) and continue my tale of Mosli. They were days filled with active discussions in an atmosphere of concrete ideals, insoluble problems which became soluble to our eyes seeing them under a different light. We shared a camaraderie which would have seemed impossible among strangers. The head of a Swiss camp spoke to us on the second day about the problems of allocations after the war. Our comrade Pougah talked about children and the various problems of re-education, how should a teacher act etc... we were much taken by this and we spent days of intellectual bliss. Don't think that I kept quiet all along, the first time that I fought against my shyness and raised my hand, my heart was beating like a drum. I heard the voice say "The word to Comrade Ottolenghi!" Then a little at a time I braced myself with more courage seeing that my questions were taken with interest and my observations were right I then felt important and a little self pride spurted out. I would have given anything to have you see me among those learned and important people, sitting with them at the table taking an active part in the solutions of very serious matters. If I think of my Saturday meetings I think you would be very proud of me. It's strange that I was never able to discuss anything with you and with strangers, yes - I don't think I'm intimidated by you, but I always feared your super critical judgement. You should have seen me when we sang standing up by the tables before meals "The Internazionale" and " Avanti Popolo" and others. One night we organized a cheerful gathering, we were too tired to discuss serious topics all the time. Everyone told something in honor of our camp in Brissago. I started to sing in chorus with my friends in limericks making fun of the more prominent personalities (not revealing the author) it was hilarious! I did not expect such a success. They were yelling "Author, Author" , but I didn't want to reveal myself. We then sang all together"We are all Comrades" ignoring that the author was there among us. What a great man Pougach is! He's so refined in his speech, he's always quoting examples making the picture clear with delicate and meaningful gestures. What impressed me the most was obtaining an immediate and conclusive answer to our queries and not what usually happens, that we're left pending to our own opinions. At the end of the day we felt as if we really accomplished something and enriched ourselves because of it. What provoked a heated discussion was the problem of preference to which problem, in case of lack of sufficient help. We read Olgiati's thesis and reflected on it for a long time. I tried to assimilate as much as possible by taking notes and later study and elaborate on them. Not being used to such an intellectual activity, such an

intense indigestion of ideas exhausted me. I'm glad to see that our people from Brissago made a good impression to the director. I can't describe our enthusiasm at the thought of putting into practice already here, the future work that is to be executed in Italy. They thought that it would be a good idea to be intrusted with the children who escaped from the valley D'ossola. They're organizing a "Home" for them, this way we could practice there. I thought I'd go crazy with joy at the thought of taking care of such children. We were then called one by one separately for an interview. They wanted to learn what our ideas were and our availability in Italy for at least one year after the end of the war. I was so overwhelmed that I gladly accepted the proposal. I only pointed out that since I was engaged to you, my first priority would be that of finding you, and having your approval my dear Gastone, and I sincerely hope that you would not disapprove of this project. Just think if we could both collaborate in this for the well being of humanity. I can picture myself at work already with you beside me and confide in one another our satisfactions as well as our difficulties and disappointments. How are you going to feel about this? What have your experiences during this period taught you? I hope we can be on the same wave length. I know I can trust you on that, you already had those ideas, you had arrived to those conclusions even before the others who alluded themselves all along. I believe that you would have no reason to reproach me one day on the decisions I made now. It's not a definite commitment but a moral commitment which I want to keep because it's very important to me. A few days ago Luttazzo came and talked to us about the Home - it seems like a done deal already and I said yes. It won't be easy, but I'll try gladly. I'll lose all the camps benefits but the committee has already taken steps towards my freedom and as soon as they'll find a place to live we'll start and I'll begin my activity as a social worker. I've been asking myself if I've thought out the whole thing thoroughly. I'm still not convinced that I should belong to one party. There shouldn't be any separate parties, only one that envelopes the universal ideas of everyone. However, I feel that the socialistic tendency is the one that attracts me the most. I think that's the ideal that I can follow more than any other, I'll study and read more about it, try to probe into it deeper. We've been hurt enough by the nice words: justice, freedom, equal rights etc... we now want facts, then I can decide better. Giuliana wanted to join right away after the Mosli, but she also postponed it, she wants to think it through. We had the opportunity to take a course in child welfare in Lausanne, Stoz would have recommended me, it would have meant going to the University and living in a big city close to Geneva. At any other time I would have jumped at the opportunity instead I said no! Maybe the mirage of the other possible city fascinated me more and then... I'll tell you a secret, the thought of crossing the border as soon as possible and be able to find you made me decide against it even with its other disadvantages: harder work, full commitment for an entire year, all the things that Mamma and Emma reproached me about; but I will not last a minute more than I have to in this country - but it's a

secret, you hear? Don't tell anybody.

Going back to my trip - the return from Mosli was sad but we were allowed to stay one day in Zurich. At night we dined at the co-operative, a strictly socialist ambience. Great big propaganda signs, I was a little taken aback thinking of our fascist taboos. But what impressed me the most was the lights of the city! During the blackouts in Italy, I dreamed of all the things I could do in a place full of lights. And I was there thinking of you still in darkness while I was strolling down those beautiful streets beaming with lights, different colored ones that went on and off. I got very emotional at one point and I felt lost a lump went up to my throat and I couldn't keep the tears from coming down my cheek while holding tight to Mara's arm who very silently understood my state of mind and comforted me. I was better after that and we went to the movies - beautiful theater but horrible movie. We didn't know where to spend the night but Ruth took us to a friend's house and she put the four of us up for the night. Giuliana and I were on a small sofa with a quilt on top which we pulled on all night. What a night!

In the morning we had a sumptuous breakfast at the "Quicq". We walked down the Bancostrass again and then we ventured on new streets and bridges under the leadership of Conigliani; finally after a great meal, agnellotti and pastries, and a quick visit to a department store (5 floors with everything under the sun) we ran to the station. We all said our goodbyes and sadly with low spirits we went back to camp. I forgot to mention that notwithstanding our best clothes, somebody at the station asked us if we were the refugees from Ossola and very compassionately offered us some money! Ruth refused with much dignity (and I was even wearing my new shoes and my fur!) It's hopeless, I think it's written all over us that we're refugees. And we wanted to be taken for tourists!

Once back we thought we had been away forever. Our usual daily routine seemed new and terrible but little by little we had to get used to it again, It was like falling from the clouds into an abyss. And now I find myself in the state of mind that I had described before!

November 16, 1944
Poor Giulinana hurt her finger. She must have punctured it with a fork and got infected. It's all swollen and rotted and very painful. She seems like a lost little girl, she needs pampering and someone to comfort her. She can't bare pain and makes a scene all the time, I understand that it's painful, I had it too, but you have to be brave. I feel sorry for her and it hurts me to see her so down. The trio is back the way it used to be and I'm glad. Sunday I had my leave and I took it without enthusiasm, this way I got my money and I paid off the debts that I had made for Zurich. I went to Locarno, but I was depressed and quiet, I didn't know what to tell Silvia. She has so many problems of her own, I can't

dump mine on her. I was quite nervous on that last day, and while I was out I got the biggest jolt in the square of Locarno. I saw Piero Colombo coming towards me! Not that I cared that much about him, in fact I never liked him, but to see a familiar face from Livorno at a time when my thoughts were so far! I suddenly plunged into a sea of memories! I was glad to stop and talk to him about all the friends we had in common and about old times. I learned from him that Lia Gennazzani had been deported, it was a shock for me, I could still see her at the beach in Pancaldi laughing and playful so tan and full of life. Poor Lia, may God help her! Piero is still the same dandy, he treated me to a pastry but I returned to camp very afflicted at the thought of Lia. I hadn't made up with Giuliana yet, I was still angry at her for wanting to prepare the report on Mosli by herself without letting either me or Mara read it. When we all had met, she read the report she had prepared, then I guess she didn't know how to proceed and she asked me to take over. I hadn't had the chance to arrange the notes I had jotted down but I made my presentation, covering, without any frills, all the facts and all the pertinent discussions. Everyone complemented me. Now, however, I don't feel like going over them again. Anyway these scuffles are over and done with, it's all been cleared and we buried the incident. I got enthusiastic again at the idea that DeCori had, to be able to reach southern Italy from Marseille and arrive in Salerno by sea. It's a possibility with a little difficulty involved, and thinking about it I don't see how we could plan this project. I don't want to leave anything unattempted, however, so I'll write to the consulate and get more information on this possibility. Vera Pacifici is leaving so I can get back my post at the sewing machine. I'm fed up with washing the dishes even if I have more free time, and I'd be making more money at the machine. My former colleagues were happy to see me back in the big room, but reproaches from those at the dishes. So I compromised, I'll stay at the dishes until Giuliana's finger heals. In order to persuade me to stay, they kept saying to me that I would get fat from sitting all those hours, maybe they're right and now I regret my decision. I started making slippers and if I finish them by Saturday, I'll bring them to Silvia.

November 20, 1944
Hip Hip Hurray! Splendid news: Elio is free! So Saturday and Sunday I'll babysit Silvia's child because she'll be very busy in Lugano. Saturday I'll go around Locarno with Paolo. I'm not accustomed to preparing meals for only two people anymore, in fact I let the milk boil over. In the evening I was so intent on my sewing when Silvia rushes in looking very radiant. "Wonderful news", she tells me. My instant thought was Elio or Gastone. Honestly I immediately thought of Elio considering the great danger he was in. Jubilant, I asked her what she knew. She told me that Elio was on his way to Rome, maybe he was even there already: Thank God! He was freed after his flight and now he was going with the English rather than wasting time to come here, this way he was preparing the way for his family. I approve and admire him for not

giving in to the impulse to come and see Silvia and Paolo. Poor Silvia, she's finally free from her nightmares. This way we spent a very cheerful day together. Now it's my turn to find out something about you, don't you think? I prayed so hard to find out first if Elio was safe, that now I trust I can have news of your whereabouts. Everybody has heard - if there's Providence, now is the time to manifest itself! Matilde Cassim is trying to get close again, these days she's lonely because of her personality, she hardly makes any friends, she's a good person, but too headstrong. She asked me if I would take her place at the dishes since she wanted to finish a sweater for Cantoni who was taking a plane for Florence! I was flabbergasted, but I gladly took her place and in exchange I asked her to give him a note for you. But where should I write it? Not knowing, I sent it to Augusto asking him to try to contact from Florence people in Norcia, or the grandfather or the Talbets. In the meantime I told him about us. I really got all worked up at the thought that the letter was really going to Italy. Up to now, I've been writing to you regularly, but I've been convinced all the while that it's been in vain. Today Cantoni leaves - to be able to get into his suitcase! I would make myself so tiny if I could! More than give you news from me, I would rather have yours. I wonder if through Cantoni or Elio I can finally learn something? Matilde today received news from her father - from Florence through Palestine! I'm glad! At this time all I can think of is leaving and scrap everything else: Valdossola committee, socialism, etc., etc. Why don't I feel any more enthusiasm? Too much time goes by and I missed out on too many opportunities: Lausanne, chemistry course, child care, and others. I'll end up that I won't accomplish anything and I'll be stuck here while the others leave. I don't know what to think. I've lost my desires, I'm becoming more positive, maybe before I was too impulsive. I'd get high too easily at every proposal.

This morning on my way back from Locarno I gave the good news about Elio to Mamma and Emma - they were overjoyed. This morning I went back to the machine and I'm glad. I improved my animals - instead of making them with two paws I can now make them with four. And I gave the cat some beautiful whiskers taken from the broom. Everybody admired him - and also the slippers were a big success. I have to learn now how to make handbags - I have to get down to business! The person in charge of the slippers was annoyed because I sell more than she does and I learned to do them by myself. Dora Hollander wrote to me and sent me a book from David telling me that she had heard from him in France. I was very pleased, he's such a fine boy and I'm glad he succeeded in his intent. Well, right now I'm happy with myself because I succeeded to overcome the depression of a few days ago. Even if there had not been any specific reason, I'm ready again to undertake my daily struggles. What saddens me is that a year has gone by, November 21st since our last goodbye - and remember the beautiful roses you brought me? When I left I felt such a strong premonition and I kept turning around many times to watch you. Vittorio and Mario slowly

disappearing from sight. Is it possible that an entire year has gone by without seeing or even hearing from one another? And how did you spend this year? How and what do you feel? If someone had told me then that a whole year would have gone by without news I would not have resisted and would have done something very foolish - and yet it went by one here one there... as long as there isn't another one in sight.

November 28, 1944
Cantoni has not left yet and I continue to wander in the dark, I'm not attracted to anything, work is making me more feeble-minded than ever. We were all vaccinated for the smallpox and it caught on me like it had done when I was a child. I didn't think I was going to have such a positive reaction. The doctor is giving us a first aid course, I like it very much and I could follow everything in French. It's like being back in the old school days when Prof. Maindari used to give us his wonderful science courses. Therefore the first day was a real treat for me to refresh my memory on my favorite subject. We'll see what follows - we have it three times a week in the evening. Now my time is really all taken. I've been back at the machine for a week and I miss my free time when I could retreat to my room, alone with my thoughts living my sad interior world. But I'm happy with other things and times goes by very swiftly.

Today dear papa is your birthday, I'll never forget your last one, I took you to the dining room, sat you comfortably on that arm chair surrounded with pillows and rushed back into the kitchen to help Mamma prepare your favorite agnellotti! My dear papa, maybe you're in the true --- you can see us and you know what fate awaits us. Walk us through this difficult road and bless us. Why am I so sensitive to past and sad experiences of this period? Up to now, when I relived them I could react differently. Now suddenly I feel all the weight on my shoulders and the load is too heavy. I thought before that nostalgia and melancholy were abstract feelings taken from novels or at best temporary emotions, now instead I feel like they're a serious illness and not easily curable and the longer one has it the more painful and serious it becomes.

December 5, 1944
Only now did I find the time to write about the great news - on Nov. 30, 1944, I received a message from Gastone!! I was so excited that I couldn't think straight and calm down. Isn't it unbelievable, fantastic, wonderful that I finally know he's in Rome safe and sound and that I finally have an address to write to?! My God these days just flew by me, I was so taken with the thought of writing to you right away! Besides a message, I also wrote two letters and gave them to two people who were going to Rome. Lucky them! I wish I could go and fly right over to you my love! So, on the 29th I was at the end of my exasperation, everybody else was receiving mail and for me, the usual disappointment, swallowing one bitter pill after another which were suffocating me to the point

where I was becoming irascible, nervous and physically run down, with headaches and blurry vision. I didn't know what to do, I was beginning to doubt my sanity. I kept asking everyone deceiving myself that someone knew something of your whereabouts. The night between the 28th and the 29th I dreamed that your grandfather was giving me news from you. I felt more cheerful in the morning because I got the idea to cable the Vatican the address of your grandfather through the Tabets, and find something out this way. But at night I was down again. On the evening of the 30th nothing came in the mail for me, as usual, only a letter for Emma from Lina Ottolenghi, a dear friend of ours. Suddenly Emma screams: "Lea, Lea there's a message from Gastone for you!" I jumped out of my chair toppling it, I tried to read your note, but I can only see your name, my heart is beating overtime, I burst out crying then laughing, I was so confused everybody was crowding me asking things and congratulating me so I ran from them to my room to be left alone. I read and reread those few lines. The few lines which give me proof of your well being and safety and confirm that you're thinking of me. I take your photograph and I --- kiss it, I had never done that, and as I was there all enthralled I got called to go and pick up the salary, it was the first time that I had forgotten to do so. It was short of 2 francs since they had not known that I was back at the sewing machine, but at that moment I didn't care, I was too happy to complain. I went out with Mara and Marcella first and then with Mamma and Emma to celebrate the "event". Back at the camp my friends called me to their room where they had very good coffee prepared for me. I was really moved to see how everyone was sharing my joy with such sincerity. Mrs. Orefice, my boss at the machine, was crying, I'm very fond of her because of her name and also because she's small and reminds me very much of aunt Ada, but she's quick and active and she cares a lot about me - and at the beginning when someone called her, I'd always get a jolt when I heard that name. So, my love, everyone is very fond of me and they show it.

When Giuliana heard about it, she was in the hospital, she wrote to me extensively and now that she's back she was overjoyed for me. That night I couldn't sleep, my mind was working overtime. I was making thousands of conjectures on how you were leading your life, and was trying to picture you in a place that I was now familiar with, and that's comforting. I imagine that you're now taking great pains to find a job so that hopefully by the time I join you, you'll be able to start your studies again. It's better for you to be there than here where you would have wasted your time. I don't want any regrets now, I've been thinking of all possible ways to communicate with you, I already sent you 2 letters, written with a very deep emotion. I wanted to tell you so much more all at once but I believe I only wrote the least important ones. Now I want to wallow in my happiness, I found out that the postal service has been resumed with the freed Italy. For sure, it will take forever to receive any mail and probably it will be censored, but it's better than nothing. Now I can't wait to receive a real letter from

you, to see your handwriting and to hear more detailed news.

Cantoni hasn't left yet, but I think he'll leave soon, I replaced my old letter with a new one with more recent news and addressed it directly to you and not to Augusto. I hope you'll get to see him so he can tell you about me. I sent the other letter to the dean of the University of Padova, Mr. Marchese. I hope you'll receive them soon. Your message was sent by mistake to Lina's husband Gino, She forwarded it to Emma thinking that it was for us. I could have received it a couple of days before so that I could have sent you the telegram instead of the Vatican. I had asked also about uncle Carlo, we don't know what has happened to him. Providence has assisted our family up to now and I hope that he is also well. We are concerned about Elio, I hope he has met with you in Rome. You can imagine how happy I am to know that you are near aunt Gina and Bianca. We were worried about them also. Are you living with them or did you just use their address for delivery purposes. Nothing else matters to me now, I've been repeating myself like a broken record: "Gastone is safe! Gastone is in Rome! Hurray!" Thank you My God!!!

Chapter 6

Neuchatel, April 9, 1945
I finally made the heroic decision to continue my writing after 5 months. I stopped writing because ever since I found out that he was safe (I kept telling myself Gastone is safe!) I don't feel the anxiety I felt before and the need to communicate with him in my diary is now replaced with direct correspondence with him. But since that prophetic day, Nov. 30 when I received your message, I haven't received anything else while I write religiously. Every time I get paid I run to buy a stamp for Italy as my first purchase. The illusion that you can receive my letters is a great comfort to me, I call it illusion because I'm really not sure unless I receive some answers. And it's a little sad to write with this insecurity. The other reason for not having kept up is because I'm always busy and tired and I can't seem to find the time to write. I'm not complaining, you're safe and waiting for me, this is all that matters.

Many things have happened during this period and I'll try to summarize them. For the new year's eve celebration we had prepared a show in Brissago - a few songs and one of my creations, different than previous ones, on the life in the camp at Brissago, involving the various most colorful characters, all sung in limericks. Everyone liked it very much and the director came to complement me. But all that phony cheerfulness did not succeed to distract me from pining for you. All I felt was loneliness in the middle of all those people. At the stroke of midnight I hugged my family; Silvia was also very sad, not having had any further news from Elio. I got away from everyone to my favorite spot overlooking the beautiful moonlit lake, so I could write to you so I could wish you all my best for the new year and to feel closer to you. The joyful notes of the waltz were reaching my ears and while the others were dancing I was daydreaming about you, dancing together as in the old days. But enough with my sad stories! After a few days the director called me and asked me if I spoke French and if I would be interested in a "laborantine" course in Neuchatel! I couldn't believe my joy! I had filled so many applications with the hope of taking some course or another, especially for a social worker. It seems that they were always organizing one thing or another, but it always was a big disappointment. It depressed me to see the time go by before me without accomplishing anything. Of all the jobs I had learned to do and I'm sure have been a great experience to me, I had enough. My nerves were shot and I became despondent, I'd work hard during my free hours to make something for money and it was becoming almost a nightmare! I'd go in my room to get something and I'd forget what and other things like that . I felt very weak and one morning I didn't feel like getting up and I stayed in bed all day. Dr. Frankel and Ms. D'Urbino felt sorry for me and they gave me some tonic pills to perk me up. As I said

previously in the evening I was taking a first aid course with other young people and this helped me to keep my brain going. Sometimes we'd have a lecture or a concert. And finally I received this bit of news and I have to leave right away. I felt bad to leave Mamma and Emma, but the desire to learn new things besides sewing and mending all day was too enticing to let go. I was also looking forward to see new places and meet new people. So after six months, on January 12th I left Brissago. I felt deep sorrow and regret at leaving those places where I had spent such pleasant days. I have both good memories and good friends there and I also felt that they were all fond of me. It was a bitter parting both from my family and from my friends and everyone showed me such an affection and love that I will never forget. I had hoped till the last minute that Mara would have come with me. She's the friend that I'm most fond of - we've always loved and understood one another without much fuss. Instead she accepted a course in dental technology so she could help her dentist brother later on. And so she left for Geneva. Everyone helped me with my final preparations and early the next morning, it was pitch black outside they all took me to the bus station waving their handkerchiefs en mass; and so I left with a heavy heart towards the unknown. My poor Mamma came with me as far as Locarno, chilling herself to the bone in the midst of all that cold and ice. Fortunately there were eight of us and we all knew one another well - and this at least was comforting to be able to support one another. It was a long and diverse trip, we were all very puzzled not knowing what we were up against. We stopped in Lucerne to tour the city a bit, it was a beautiful city, but the bitter cold kept us from enjoying the sights and moreover an ice cold rain was going right through our bones. We crossed a beautiful wooden bridge which reminded me so much, even if different , of the Ponte Vecchio; we visited the cathedral, more beautiful on the outside than inside, and then to warm up we went into an elegant cafe where we were taken a little, and I was trying to show off - my French got answered back in Italian! Back on our trip, we stopped in Olte and then in Neuchatel! It was around six P.M., the snow was deep and my feet
were wet and frozen due to my leaky shoes. Loaded down with our luggage we asked where is the streetcar for Hauterive - we go down some stairs and up to a square: snow and darkness is upon us! We wait for the streetcar jumping up and down to keep from getting frostbitten. We make Iole Calef our leader , she has the most imposing figure - she takes care of the tickets and asks where to get off. Everyone is very kind to us and finally we get off and up we go again on another hill, we're never getting there and we're dead tired, we ask for directions and they point out "les Tilleries" and finally we're there! A gate, a house which in the dark has a very medieval look, an imposing aspect like a theater; we go through a door, up the stairs, nothing, nobody is coming out to meet us. We see a young man and ask where the director is - "It's me" he answers and we see a young man in a kilt come down the stairs. He takes us to our rooms upstairs, there are two of them and we have to share them. There's another Italian girl named

Bettina who came from Tivoli of Lucerne, I'm glad, I hope she's nice, we'll see. The two Cases and the two Pardos take one room, and the two Calef, me and Sandra take the other. After a while Bettina shows up, small, shy, and alone. I feel a little sorry for her and we try to be friendly - in fact in no time at all we were all talking and joking like old friends. The room is cute, very simple with cots to sleep on (goodbye sheets from Brissago) a dresser, a small table, and two chairs. Outside is pitch black and inside is freezing. We go downstairs where a supper of coffee and milk awaits us, then somewhat tired we make our beds and try to sleep, each one of us absorbed in our own sad thoughts. The next day we put our few things away while waiting for the luggage that was sent from Brissago. We're very cold, there's not enough heat and the director has a very forbidding countenance, but maybe underneath she's very good and kind.

Finally Monday, January 15, 1945, great event: we start school!! It was very emotional to be able to go to school again after having been thrown out of Italy. Hopping happily on the snow we go down to catch our streetcar and in ten minutes we're at school, a big building with a sign "Ecole de Commerce" and in front another similar one "Universite", the bell rings and we go in with all the other students up the stairs. There's the typical school atmosphere in the air, it's been so long since I've been in a public school. I'm very much affected and what a rush of far away memories! After so many months of camp to find myself like a free girl in the company of others just like everybody else in a familiar scholastic atmosphere. It's like a dream, my heart is pounding, but it's really me, Lea Ottolenghi who's sitting at a school desk in a regular classroom! What a feeling! The dean comes in, a very serious and distinguished man, he introduces the teacher to us, Professor Marmier with whom we'll have most of our chemical lab lessons. He takes attendance and to each one of us he asks what kind of preparation we had previously. We're given notebooks and measurements for the lab coats are taken. I'm a student again! I never thought I'd be so happy about it! Gastone, why aren't you here to share this with me? And to think that it was you who had thought of coming precisely to this city, maybe in this very school. How funny and ironical fate is!

April 10, 1945
Every day we met all the different professors, all very good. It was a little tough for me at first, both for the language and the long absence from the books. I tried to follow the lesson by taking as many notes as possible in french, not worrying about the mistakes. Then back home I would copy them consulting the others on the points that I wasn't sure of. The time schedule is very dense: eight hours a day, but every subject is so interesting and it either opens up for me new horizons or teaches me more of what I had learned previously in the same field. For the first time I feel joy in learning as much as possible. I want to take the most advantage of my studies; I think how in Italy we all tried to study

the least possible and how so many subjects would bore me so much. Here it's the opposite, maybe because I'm more mature and I feel the necessity I would say the need to apply my brain to intellectual things after so much time spent on only material work. I feel that I have to learn now what later I could practice. We spend long hours in the lab with practical analysis. How strange the first few times! You should have seen me with my white lab coat in front of my table with so many beakers and tubes all in line. The necessary equipment was given to me at the beginning and then my collection of beakers got bigger with each lesson. Every one of us has a locker with all the necessary material. The first day he taught us to fuse two glass vials to make test tubes. We started the first experiments with different materials in order to recognize the different reactions to heat, smell, etc. Then the experiment with the coal and the "chalumeau" for metals, and then more complex reactions written in formulas. Now we use filters to analyze more thoroughly and we're even capable of recognizing a compound. But what a long drawn out thing! But the more we do it the more I like it. Our little yellow Professor Marmier was really good to get us from nothing to where we are now and I'm sorry that he is leaving for Bern. We have to have another teacher, too bad because he got to know each one of us and he had a good impression of the class. Anatomy class! It's great! We have a fantastic teacher, he simplifies for us the most difficult and complicated things, he draws such beautiful anatomical designs that they look like works of art. This is one of the subjects that I love the most - we have it at the university where there's a rich well stocked lab - and I've become very familiar with the different skeletons and with seeing real human section slides under the microscope. I didn't think I could become so insensitive. One time we went with the professor to the museum to admire the exhibition of the works of Visal and he illustrated them so well to us. It was beautiful to see the synchronism of the landscape behind each work representing the human body, first with all the muscles, then getting more bare until all the trees are left to their naked limbs. Visal is one of the first true anatomists of the second half of the 500's. Our Dubois is really very good! What should I say of the microscope technique! A university professor, they say he's famous, a celebrity, very ironic though, who seems to make fun of everyone but who teaches divinely! When I got my microscope in my hands with my name on the plate of its box, I became enthralled at the idea of my eyes seeing such a marvelous world unknown to me! The first time I saw the claw of a flea... it's funny, but it was a revelation to me. We have to train ourselves to observe and at the same time draw what we see. I can't draw to save my life (I never took that in school), but I did my best and it wasn't bad. Then we worked with "sel"! The odor was not very pleasant, but the results were great because I was able to observe that there were such perfect worm eggs and distinguish them besides. Now the lessons are more interesting because we're learning the preparations of tissues' sections to be observed later under the microscope. I had no idea it would be

such complicated work. Biology! That's also so interesting. We have a professor with big sugar bowl ears, pear shaped face, and mean triangular eyes. His name is Flavarger. We then have Nicolet for chemistry and pharmacy, maybe it will come in handy so I can help Grandfather Castelli in his pharmacy. But I'm not attracted to this particular subject. Nicolet is really funny, he looks like a circus magician. Since most of the times the experiments he tries never seem to work. For shorthand and commercial correspondence we have a mulatto woman who we call Mademoiselle Stink or SH2 because she has such a terrible smell. These last subjects are not very important and couldn't be of much help. I'm really pleased to be taking these courses, lessons are very clear and remain impressed in your mind because of the related experiments and projections. I had forgotten our dear friend Ackerman, alimentary analysis, the only one whose initial lesson scared us with all those organic chemistry formulas, but now on the practical side it's a different ball game. We started analyzing milk - it's very interesting. Finally there's Professor Clerc, medical analysis, and no need to tell you the fun when we have to draw urine with our mouths from the test tubes to be analyzed.

April 11, 1945
Before I continue I want to express my overflowing delight: Today I received a letter from Livorno!! It's not from Gastone like I thought at first with my heart thumping to my throat, but from Eli, poor dear she's so good to think of writing to me. She made me so happy to tell me of her conversation with Gastone. It's a rather recent letter from the 28th of February. How wonderful and touching to find once again old friendships after all that we went through. How I feel close to you my dear friend of such happy times! But we'll get our smiles and joy back, our youth deserves them! I read and reread your letter dear Eli, it brought me back to the times of our beautiful friendship, of school and of our two boyfriends, who thank God are safe. I was so sorry to hear that your dad was so seriously ill. You also told me that Gastone has become more manly - oh how I would love to see him, why aren't I there too, why has fate separated us so? So Gastone asked you for my two photos of Brissago. That means that he has received at least two of my numerous letters. I'm so happy! Thank you, Eli! I lived in my mind your meeting with Gastone and I was there with you, you felt my presence - correct?

So I also learned that the Belforte are also safe, they were the only ones from your family Gastone that I hadn't had any news. What a strange world: I'm here now studying while you, Eli, are working in Livorno, exactly the opposite of what was happening a year ago, when you were still in school and I was working at Coppini. Moreover, your letter is giving me a lot of hope that soon I'll be receiving a letter directly from Gastone, even if old it would be such a comfort to me from this terrible distance. If I think that this letter comes from Livorno, from my sea, then now I can really begin to picture how your life is and where it is Gastone. I heard

from aunt Giorgina in Palestine. She tells me that you're a reporter.How strange, I never thought of such a profession for you before. I'm still very confused. Do you write? or are you in administration? Your aunt was very dear and kind to me and I wrote back right away to thank her. Sisa Lopez was also very kind and exuberant, to think that we know one another only through our letters. Through her I found out about my grandparents in Bolgheri, about the Lattes, of Vittorio at the radio and he and Mario are studying at the University.

How about you my love? I hope that your work is satisfying but above all that it's not interfering with your studies. You have to achieve your ideals and get your degree, which I believe is still in economics. Oh my love how can I describe the wild joy I experienced when I finally received your telegram. I was here, it was the end of January at around 6:30 and while I was at the dinner table I received a telephone call from Mamma. She was so excited and read me the telegram, which had arrived at Brissago, over the phone. All I could do was stutter, I was so confused that I still had the phone in my hand when the line had gone dead. I couldn't believe it. I went back to table radiant with happiness and all the girls were all around me cheering me on, but they couldn't certainly understand the deep joy that was overwhelming me. I couldn't eat anymore, I kept thinking that they were one day old news and the fact that you were holding a job made me aware that things were getting back to normal. And to think of you in Livorno, our beloved dear city where you'd be walking on well known streets, all this had a great emotional effect on me. I then received two other messages from you, one sent to Roberto and the other to Gino and so for the first time since I've been in Switzerland, I saw your handwriting. I wanted to save them but the reply was attached to them and in order to answer you right away, I had to relinquish them. What moved me to tears was a letter from Lina, as usual I was at the table having lunch, and inside one of Mamma's letters I noticed that there was one of Lina's. At the beginning I couldn't read it because suddenly my vision became very blurry and then a big lump lodged in my throat in reading a letter that you had sent Lina and which she transcribed to me. I relived all the dangers that you went through, the anguish that you suffered and all the while your thoughts were toward me, and I cried and cried at this both for the past pain and for the present joy that you have finally overcome it all and are miraculously safe. I didn't have any illusions before I got your messages, I always imagined the worst, my imagination was always working to make me suffer very much. But, God willing, the worst is over and this horrible war is really coming to an end.

Poor Linuccia, my heart went out to her, to think what she must have gone through when she thought Duccio dead, poor dear how I suffered for her, I hope she can find well deserved peace and happiness in her life. That afternoon in the lab I couldn't stop thinking of you. I kept having the picture of both you and Lina in

front of my eyes suffering, and I found myself doing things mechanically like a sleepwalker - in fact I goofed up a bit with the acids. One girl fainted because she had breathed some H2S - what a scene! But I was in another world. As soon as I got back home I copied your letter which I read and reread constantly. However, I can't be completely happy, the agony in Silvia's letters concerning Elio haunts me, I don't know what I would do to hear that he's safe! And today finally a letter from Silvia (with 5 francs inside) gave me the wonderful news - the time has also come for Silvia to breathe easier. I was jumping up and down and screaming with joy. Everyone thought I was going crazy. I then went out with a friend to celebrate the event and we toasted to you Gastone , and to Elio!

And now I'm here once again waiting for your letters hoping they don't delay too much and then waiting .... to be in your arms, because I can't take it anymore. You should see what beautiful spring weather we are having now, I wonder how beautiful Livorno must be! Our Pineta!! A few days ago, I went by myself to explore the nearby country side and there was a Pineta. I stretched out on the ground and closed my eyes - the same pine perfume. I didn't want to open my eyes, I wanted the illusion of being next to you and breathing the same air. I'm being too sentimental, enough of that, I want to be brave, so I woke up from my dream and returned to the sad reality.

There are 9 Italians here, we found one here, Bettina Issel, she's very nice and she's fond of me. The other 14 are foreigners - some of them really beautiful and rather spunky and...they really know how to live. Never mind, they're very nice and we all get along very well. There are also some Russians in charge of the housekeeping, their morals are quite loose, but good robust peasant girls. The director revealed her true personality - quite a hypocrite and she stays with her vice, the daughter of the concierge! They call her "our man" because she's more a man than a woman - in every sense. Luckily, we're in school most of the time where we forget our status of refugee.

From March 28 to the 6th of April I was on leave in Brissago to see Mamma. How strange to go back to the Grand Hotel! I won't describe the festive welcome, hugs and the deluge of questions on my life here! Even the director was very kind. I spent Easter there, spending wonderful days in the sunshine - that which we don't have here. We had a very cold winter and the first few days we spent chattering our teeth even indoors. There I found my dear Mara, who then left for Geneva, and many new people. The big news was about Emma, she went to Locarno as an aide for childrens' care and as a teacher. Anna is now with Mamma, but alas, she is still the same, getting into jams and upsetting Mamma, but then she'd be so good and endearing. Emma looked very tired to me, I don't think this is the ideal situation for her. I left feeling very preoccupied for her and Mamma. Miss Stiffel very generously prepared a good box

lunch for me to take on the return trip. And speaking of which I hear someone calling to me "Hello beautiful", I turn around and who do I see but that schlemiel Carlo Bonomi who starts again with his stupidities, fortunately I got off at Schwyz to meet Mamma's cousin Silvia Solay for dinner. It was a sumptuous dinner and if I had known I wouldn't have eaten on the train. I hadn't felt so full in ages. We spoke in French throughout and she complemented me; she was extremely kind and gave me some sweets to take with me for the trip. A very strange house full of so many different things that it looked like an antique shop. The town is beautiful all surrounded by snowy peaks.

I got back rather tired after the long trip, I think by now I've been all over Switzerland. My friends were waiting for me and after they fed me they dragged me to the movies. I didn't want to go, but since it was Mr. Sirbenstein who was paying... so I enjoyed a beautiful movie that I had already seen in Italy: "The Lady of the Camelias". This Mr. Sirbenstein is a wonderful person who acts as our protector, he's middle aged and very distinguished looking and he got shoes for us, for which I was in desperate need. We owe him a lot. He has a beautiful store of women's clothing called "Innovazione". My shoes were old, ski boots which I repaired, but the water was always going through the soles and walking on the snow on my way to and from school, my feet would get wet, and consequently ice cold from the frigid weather (It was down to 20 degrees below 0 C) Then inside the classroom as the feet would thaw out, I would feel terrible pain that would bring tears to my eyes. So it was with extreme joy that I went with him and my friends to buy new shoes! I picked some high shoes that were both sturdy and practical; the foreigners were trying on some thin shoes with high heels while we Italians were going for the practical ones.

I'm still on partial vacation because we have school only in the morning for this week and then full new schedule for the next three months! But I'm not complaining. I lead a life of a student abroad; if it wasn't for the nuisance of our director who's a lesbian... she enjoys coming in the bathroom while we're showering...Bah!

If you were here, Gastone, I'd be in seventh heaven. Even if a little late, spring has arrived here also and it's so beautiful to take walks... and doing nothing. Instead I have to study a lot because I want to do well on the exams and get a degree which will be very useful later. I've done well so far and have had good grades. I'm not a "raker" (it's the name we give to the book-worm because she has buck teeth), but I prefer to be the way I am. A few days ago I received a letter from David Susskind - he's the young man I met on one of the outings to the mountains. We had discussed socialism at length and he had lent me some books. Now he's in Belgium, he escaped here to go to France to fight with the partisans. He's a good looking boy and very much on the ball and

we developed a very strong bond between us of pure and simple friendship; that's why I was very surprised at the tone of his letter which implied something more than friendship. I'm sorry that he misinterpreted my feelings for him, so I wrote back immediately telling him that I was engaged to someone in Italy and that I appreciated that he had acted according to his principles. I hope you don't mind,Gastone, but I assure you that I've always acted like a lady and there's no reason to complain or scold me - my conscience is very clean. Going back to my trip, it's so wonderful to travel all over and for free, too! I would love, one day to return to these places with you, Gastone, and show you all the places I've been and let you experience the emotions and feelings that I experienced. I thought that I'd save some money from the leave salary, instead at Brissago they issued me a child ticket by mistake - what jerks! And I had to send them the difference. Too bad, but just the same I was able to buy myself a jacket that I will save for Italy - I don't want you to see me in rags. I'm really saving every cent so I can buy myself a handbag that I had seen weeks ago. I wonder if I can manage with my meager earnings of 3.90 francs. I spent practically everything on stamps. But let's proceed - we have to live! I was hoping to have a letter from you for my birthday. What a beautiful present it would have been, what a pleasant surprise! But nothing, but I'm sure it will arrive soon enough, right? The Russians, as usual, are making bedlam between their wild singing and dancing, the radio blasting while everyone else is trying to study. By now I've gotten used to concentrating even with the noise. But what's going to happen when we really have to study for exams? It's late, it's time to go to bed my love, good night. As always my thoughts are with you and I bless you with all my heart.

April 15, 1945
Tonight I'm in a good mood. We took a wonderful hike up to Chaumont - what a beauty! I would love to go back there with you, Gastone - promise me? You were with me all through the walk and we were talking as usual, comparing this to our "pineta". This one is bigger and maybe more beautiful, but I prefer ours. I wonder what beautiful sun rays you have now through the pine trees. Back home loaded down with flowers, I listened to the radio: They're almost in Berlin! We're practically at the long awaited end. I dream of our meeting day and night.

I'm so glad that Giuliana Arieti wrote that she's coming to see me next Sunday. Poor girl, she writes that she's with a family that works her to the bone. I'm glad I didn't accept it. I had tried to stop in Bern on my way back from leave to see her, but to my regret it wasn't possible - it's good that she can come herself. She wrote back such a long dear letter in reply to the one I had sent her where I tried to cheer her up. We have so much to talk about on Sunday. It will be wonderful to see someone from our group of Livorno. I'm really happy to see her and reminisce about the past with memories and the friends we both shared. And then Monday back

to school, alas, with a full schedule to boot. God knows at 2 o'clock how hot it will be in that lab. The other morning I prepared on the microtome a tadpole in paraffin. Here and there we had different jars with frogs and were rather disgusting to look at, not to say nauseating. At a certain point we saw a frog jumping on the floor. We all started to scream and the professor rushed to grab it and placed it with its mate to make...toads - oh boy! I kept for myself a toad in paraffin as a souvenir. I showed it to its parents, but they couldn't have cared less, they continued doing their thing...I'm telling you!

The other night we went out to see the town. It's really beautiful all lit up, but with empty pockets you can't do anything except sigh in front of the windows chock full of inviting sweets and other good things! It's better not to go out. One craves too many things, besides sweets I'm attracted to beautiful clothes and lingerie. When I was in Italy, working and making money and could have bought anything I wanted I never bothered and now...I don't understand such foolish ambitions that have come over me. Every season I tried to buy one good outfit to wear at the end of the war for Gastone. He cares that I be well groomed, he has good taste and he has also passed it on to me. However my love, if I was told that in order to leave I would have to wear dirty rags, I would do it immediately. You should also see how many beautiful things there are for men. I'm sure you could use some, but how can I do it? But at least I'm going to buy you a silk tie. I'll do without my handbag, I'll never be able to save 20 francs anyway. I've been stopping for a long time in front of a shop that sells lighters, and there was one particular one that I liked for you and my friends were teasing me that I'd never be able to save enough money to buy it. At the same time they would suggest which one would have been better for "Gastone". Until the day came that I had all the money and we all went en masse to buy it after a much discussed decision of which one was more suitable, it was a great event for the whole company! Two of us went in, Sandra and I, while the others waited outside, then I showed it to everybody and triumphantly I brought it to inscribe the initials. Now I'm satisfied, I have it here with me. Maybe it's not good enough, I should have gotten a better one, but I'm sure you'll like it - it's simple and sober. Lately the quality of our food has deteriorated and decreased. My stomach is empty and I'm always hungry. How sad to have neither money nor stamps to buy something. They've decreased the bread portions and the coupons, what's more I can't even eat it these days because it's Easter. There's a little tension with the "heads" we had decided on a hunger strike, but for now we thought we would wait to see if it improved.

There's a concert of Brackhaus, but how can I go, it's too expensive! There's also a good movie, but I have to choose between the two. This is an intellectual town and it offers a lot of possibilities. Not long ago I went to a beautiful concert in a church in a nearby town. Another time we heard a lecture at the

university on Giotto, only the slides weren't any good. If only I had money...but I'd rather do without many things than do what others do - have their boyfriend pay for things. We Italians are not that kind. As a joke the other night in our room we were rehearsing how we could lure someone..We laughed! What a crazy thing! Now I'm no longer shocked as I would have been before, especially noticing how the foreign girls go about it with such nonchalance. They still make fun of me though, because I still can't get some of the jokes, but I prefer it this way.

Gastone, do you know that I have with me a pine nut from our old"Pineta"? I pray you to tell my subjects to refurbish it well because I (the queen) am about to arrive. Good night now. I better not read all the stupidities I wrote, I'm so tired!

April 17, 1945
Today I went to have my pictures taken, not only to send one to Gastone and Eli, but above all to have them ready for the passport because I really hope that it's only a matter of days now till our return and I want to have all my forms ready. Silvia sent me a message from Elio, it's strange that he's in Rome, in Via Colonna 32, the same address as Gastone and Aunt Gina, I don't understand how they managed. Today they changed our analytical chemistry professor, too bad, I had grown fond of Professor Marmier - he was so good. This one is a young man and I think he's really trying too hard. When we got back home, we described the new teacher to the girls of the second group, as a little old man with a beard. Boy will they be surprised tomorrow to see that young man. Now I'll stop, I want to write to Italy.

April 24, 1945
I spent a beautiful week with some variations to our routine. Backhaus concert (magnificent) then a beautiful movie, another concert of a Strauss quartet. It was performed by some refugees and it wasn't that good, and finally Sunday Giuliana Arieti came and we spent the whole day together. That morning I woke up very early, impatient to get to the station and finally when the train arrived I had before my eyes the beautiful image of Giuliana, slightly different, more grown up, more beautiful. To me she represented the whole group of my friends in Livorno. After hugs, kisses, and looking at one another with the relative comments, we started to talk incessantly, reminiscing about old times. A name, a fact or word was enough to make us relive our lives of long ago. A life that seemed so vibrant and near to me at that moment while other times it seemed so far away in the past. I don't have to tell you how many times your name came up, Gastone, it was always on the tip of my tongue among other various friends. We toured the city, I showed her the principal sights, acting as a guide, among them the house, school, etc. and in the afternoon we sat at a cafe and it seemed unbelievable that the two of us were here in Neuchatel. My friends were very impressed by her and I had a very strong desire to visit her in Bern. I think that one of these

Sundays I'll do it even if we're not allowed. I have some money saved and I hope to scrounge enough for the ticket 7.15 fr. When I took her back to the station that night it was like part of my Livorno was leaving with her and I really want to see her again. It's odd how different it is to meet a person you've known under normal circumstances and then see her under the present conditions - strange feeling indeed! We feel more than ever the desire to go back to Italy, after having talked together she told me that she's not happy at the service, and I'm happy with my choice.. We talked about escaping to France, but what if they catch us and put us in an enclosed camp. We've been patient for so long that it's better to wait till the end, which is very near. In Italy, Bologna and Modena are with the allies and Hitler is dead God willing! Berlin is flying the red flag! I'm happy, but getting too impatient.

While talking to Giuliana, Edda's story came out and she told me that one night at a party you kept dancing with her. (she could have kept quiet about it). I laughed, but an old thorn came back to sting me. I know that she's engaged and you have forgotten about it, but the thought that another Edda could arise in all this time that we've been apart saddens me to no end. However, I don't want to think about these silly notions. Gastone, my dear we have to get together real soon otherwise...I'll be too old.

April 26, 1945
Can there be a girl happier than me? No! Because no one has a Gastone that writes such beautiful things, who's waiting for her so anxiously in her city to offer her a future of complete happiness! I want to shout it to the whole world: "I received a letter from him". I've been longing for it for fifteen months, but my joy is so great that it made up for the long wait and the anguish. I was coming back from school at noon deep in my thoughts, always hoping in the incoming mail, and this time my hope did not disappoint me. I was almost home when I see Bettina rushing towards me while arguing with another girl about who was going to have the privilege to bring me the letter. She was yelling "Lea, hurry, it's from Gastone!" I was afraid it was a joke but I ran anyway - my heart thumping to my throat, threw my books on the ground and sat on the steps with the letter in my hands. I still couldn't believe that the dream that I've had for such a long time was finally becoming a reality. When I finally got the letter opened, I was a nervous wreck. I immersed my self in its content and the whole world around me just disappeared. First I read it all in one breath, and then very slowly savoring every word - leisurely smiling or crying according to the lines. Gastone, I found you again in full as you were and I could really picture you and hear you speak. I suffered again to read of your terrible adventures. What you must have gone through while I was here protected and leading a relatively tranquil life, but believe me until I had news from you I was living through a nightmare. You scold me on something I wrote about male company, but I assure, you you misunderstood what I wrote, it's my fault, when I write on impulse I never take into

consideration what the feeling or interpretation of the reader can be, especially when the reader had no knowledge of my life here. But I'm happy just the same, I still feel your unchanged love and your anxiety in seeing me again, is a match to mine. I can understand that during this time you must have had quite a few experiences with various girls who were attracted to you, it's human nature, and I'm not so narrow minded as to think a good looking young man such as yourself could lead a life of a monk for such a long time. That doesn't mean that I don't feel deep inside a kind of pang which is commonly know as ... jealousy! (I won't admit it even to myself but I'm telling only in one ear so that nobody else can hear) But let's forget these thoughts, congratulations on the brilliant career that you have undertaken! You're really superb! I never doubted your intelligence and I was sure that you would have gotten ahead in what you wanted, but that doesn't take away the pride and admiration I have for you. Am I worthy of you? How will you find me? While I'm burning with impatience to be with you forever, I have to confess that I have just a few fears of how the first few days together are going to be, if we'll get used to one another like before, notwithstanding the inevitable changes in both of us. I'm really silly to have these thoughts, I'm sure that I'll find my Gastone the same. And deep in my heart I feel that I'm also still the same as before only my love has multiplied during this time and if I still have much longer, I'll run away because I can't resist any longer. Your letter made me so happy, I carry it with me all the time and by now I know it by heart - and today it's even better than yesterday, I was too excited to realize all the wonders that it did for me.

Today we received more good news, one after the other, Milan, Turin, Verona - our patriots are rising everywhere and now the north of Italy is being freed! I'll go back soon, I can feel it, who can hold me back? It's so beautiful that we Italians are the ones who are fighting for our beautiful cities. It still seems like a dream to me. And that pig of Mussolini with Farinacci, he cowardly tried to escape to Switzerland, but luckily they were captured and I think they were locked up in a monastery in Como. Hurray! It's smooth sailing from now on! When I heard this I couldn't stay in my shoes. I wish I could also participate in Italy during these days of a new renaissance. The hour of the insurrection has arrived, I can imagine how you will take this news! Here we were all going crazy, I was yelling and jumping so much that the others told me that when the end of the war will be announced they will have to tie me and gag me for fear of what my screams and enthusiasm can do! I'm ecstatic, ecstatic, ecstatic! See you soon, Gastone. I could come immediately the way I am now in my slippers, on foot, I can't take it anymore! My love, a big hug, do you feel me close to you?

April 27, 1945
It's useless, even this morning my imagination was taking off to far away places, all that's happening is becoming more urgent, more

beautiful and I almost regret the fact that I'm not in Brissago - from which at the right moment I could escape to Italy, while from here God knows how much longer I would have to wait. During my chemistry class, my thoughts as usual were somewhere else and mechanically I found myself writing your name: GASTONE on the sheet on which I was taking notes - and then almost by its own will the pen started writing limericks.

April 28, 1945
I'm not myself, I can't think straight, I'm quivering with impatience. How can I resist for another two and a half months while Italy is being liberated. It's not possible, I'll go mad! I'll fill out my repatriation forms right away and if they don't let me leave legally I'll know what to do. The road I took to get here is now easier to get back. If they don't give me the permit to leave I'll manage just the same to get to Livorno, and you Gastone will have the biggest surprise to see me so unexpectedly. At the thought of this meeting I feel all choked up! All my friends want to meet you and they offered their hospitality for our...honeymoon. Gastone, how will our meeting take place? I'm sure in a different way than what I'm imagining!

May 1, 1945
This time I'm really not myself. I can't believe that I can fill out the repatriation form . I'm wild with joy! I wanted to do it right away so I called Emma who tried to calm my "boiling spirits". Amedeo has already left - Good for him. Emma begs me to have a little more patience and to wait for her news as she finds out how things stand down there. If I could think reasonably I should really wait, the war is not entirely over, there are still Nazis and fascists around in armed bands and there are no communications with Livorno. I have burning coal under my feet, I can't get anything done. I can't pay attention in school, nor can I study, all I can do is dream about my return trip. Emma insists on my finishing the course. But how can I endure two and a half more months of this when I'll know that I can leave. To see the others leave while I stay behind. I didn't realize how long I had been on the phone and I found myself paying six francs! But I couldn't do without. It seems that conditions in Italy are disastrous, maybe she's exaggerating so I wouldn't leave. I'll just wait a few days, but then I want to leave even if I have to go by myself. Giuliana also wrote to me that she's very impatient to leave, I could always leave with her.

May 4, 1945
The war was practically over on May 2nd. I keep repeating it to myself so it will sink in. Is it possible that such a piece of news comes so suddenly after years of waiting? I'm so shocked that I can't even enjoy it. Unfortunately the conditions are such that we won't be able to savor to the fullest such a longed for end. At least it ended with the death of the German terror. We wanted to

celebrate this great event by not going to school, and after a long discussion with the foreigners in the next room, we won! That jerk of a secretary suggested that we should celebrate the armistice instead so we wouldn't miss two days of school! This is so typical of their mentality! Cold, calculating, incapable of understanding our situation and our enthusiasm. Lately I've been in such a frenetic state of excitement that I haven't been able to eat nor sleep. Now I have to keep calm and wait for the bureaucratic papers to go through and I'm sure that won't be too fast. Now, as a reaction, my nerves are so relaxed that I feel a sense of apathy, I feel empty. I had finally decided to leave, but the frontiers are closed for now. We have to wait for the American visa and for the communications to be re-established. Now that I think back it would have been foolish, but I'm sure I would have gotten to Livorno one way or another even if it would have been a disastrous trip. I should have left immediately, before they closed the frontier, that's why I was so feverishly impatient, but I don't think I'll have to wait much longer. My dear Gastone, our meeting is no longer a hope - but it's becoming a reality. It's a question of just a few more weeks. I'm sorry that I won't be able to finish my course now that it's almost over, but I've decided and it's too much to ask me to wait any longer. I'm sorry I'm not already there to participate in such great days of glory and celebrate the end together. We'll enjoy them just the same when we reminisce about them. You have already foreseen so many things that have happened, remember the discussions with Mamma? There's always the problem of Mamma and the children who wouldn't be able to get back until the situation is back to normal - for room and board and for communications. But I don't feel like waiting for them. Anna as usual got into one of her scrapes - she hurt her knee while jumping from a diving board and I'm afraid she'll be laid up for a while. To think that she already went swimming while here it's still so cold. It seems like we're going back to winter with snow and all. They even turned on the heat again - and it's May! I'm dreaming of my beautiful sun in Livorno and of you Gastone, walking by the well known streets thinking (who knows) about your Pusse who is coming back soon!

May 8, 1945
"THE WAR IS OVER" I try to repeat it to myself and I was ready for it after the last events, but to see it written in black and white with big letters in the newspapers, it's certainly something else. It's been five years that we've longed for this moment. But I'm a little melancholy, the immense joy that I expected to have from this great announcement was dampened by the regret of not being with you in Italy to celebrate such a long awaited peace. I never felt so homesick for my country as I did today, I really feel that in a foreign country, I long for my city...they even made us go to school today. In the morning I couldn't even pay attention to one word that was said. The voice of the teacher was like a distant buzzing, every now and then I'd come back to reality, but my mind was far off to our cities imagining them adorned with flags, the

bands and all the fanfare of all the people drunk with joy and screaming in the streets - and most of all my thoughts went to you, Gastone, how sad you must be not to have me with you especially on a day like today. But at least you, being in Italy, were taken by all the excitement around you. To watch the professor's face talking about brains, electricity, and optics, etc. was really getting on my nerves and I wanted to shout: "Don't you realize that the war is over?" Finally those endless hours were over and on my way home I saw some students shouting a few flags flying here and there. Oh why am I here? We were off in the afternoon, I listened to Churchill on the radio and then I wrote to you Gastone, hoping it would be for the last time and I could join you before the letter reaches you. The die is cast! I've decided to abandon my course and leave as soon as the frontiers open. Today I gave my passport to get it up to date and be ready. I'll ask for a certificate that I took this course for only five months in that particular school. Everybody tells me to have a little more patience and finish, but I didn't see the necessity and anyway what good will it do me? Nobody can hold me back now.

Tonight we were invited in town to see the demonstrations - we had hoped for God knows what: what a disappointment! People were walking around very nonchalant as if nothing had happened, and after fifteen minutes I took the trolley and went back home. To think of all the plans we had made in Italy to celebrate this moment. Remember the bottle we put away? I hope things won't continue to be this bad. I promised my friends that a year from now on this very day, we'll all meet in Piazza Duomo in Milan and then we'll celebrate as we should! You'll come too, Gastone, won't you? I wonder how you spent this day, but soon you'll be able to tell me! What's important is that the war is OVER! Hurray!

May 10, 1945
Today we spent a magnificent day! To celebrate the end of the war we took a walk, "our woman and our man" also came with us and they were very nice. We walked all day from morning until night, eating outdoors in the fresh air - plenty of sunshine and good air on the top of the mountain and through the woods and pine forests. I saw true prairies of a fantastic green and the Giura mountain chains and the Mont Blanc. We then went down to a small town where we ate and drank, everything offered by the director who proved to be real exquisite. We picked lots of flowers - especially forget-me-nots. I really enjoyed myself. I felt happy, young, and healthy and I'm glad we ended this period with such a pleasant outing. I think this one will really be the last. Back home I was feeling full of glee and I learned the great news that the frontiers were opened once again and convoys are being organized for the return! I'm radiant with happiness - who feels like studying! My dear Gastone, I truly believe our reunion is approaching rapidly. I already sent to Bern the book for repatriation and now I'm waiting anxiously for that fatal day when I'll finally leave and I'm sure I'll manage to get to Livorno just fine! Hip Hip Hooray! Am I happy or what!!!

May 28, 1945
I'm the happiest girl in the whole wide world. I received your letter Gastone and it resurrected me! To think that my friends played a joke on me and hid it - and as usual, when I walked into my room I looked straight on the bed to see if there was any mail - nothing! While everybody else was busy reading their own letters. I was a little depressed and then that stupid Vanda says to me: "Oh, I forgot there's a letter for you, I think it's from Gastone". I jumped on the bed and as soon as I had your letter in my hands everyone else was forgotten: my eyes only saw you alive and well telling me such beautiful things; you gave me such an immense joy in making me feel loved by you and waited by with my same intensity. Oh my Gastone, you're so great, you're so good - how capable you are to give me the necessary comfort and you make life appear so beautiful despite all the ugliness that exists. Your love makes me float above all things. I was really down you know, I extremely needed a good word from you, to have some tangible proof of your existence - of your thoughts near me. How can I study for exams when my heart is beating so hard? I hear a song in my heart of joy and love and I feel that I'm yours completely. Unfortunately, it's not true that the frontiers are open.

I haven't accomplished anything these last few days. I only thought of a possible escape. From here it's impossible, if I had been in Ticino it would have been easier. Mamma came here on her leave and I spent some very pleasant days with her. Poor Mamma, maybe I overtired her by taking her around town. I showed her the school, the house and she bought me a very pretty dress which I want to save for my return to Italy. I got back late and not wanting to be seen I sneaked through the window thinking it would lead me to the hallway and instead I found myself in the male secretary's room. He thought that I was there intentionally and invited me to stay, but I ran away in the dark and in all my confusion I went in the wrong door and ... I was in the lady director's room and ... she was in bed with the female secretary. I was stunned, but finally found the way back to my room.

I asked for a three day leave, instead of waiting for July to have six days. I wanted to talk to Emma and Silvia to make the necessary plans. I got the leave and I spent three wonderful days. I even stopped in Lugano where Mrs. DeMartino welcomed me with open arms. She showed me so much warmth and kindness and gave me a wonderful meal besides. One day in Locarno where I had the opportunity to calm my enthusiasm by talking to my sisters. In Brissago I visited with Mamma and had a fabulous swim. I had quite an adventure in Lugano because of a pair of sandals and when I talked about it, everyone made fun of me. And now I'm resigned to study and complete this blessed course, but Silvia promised me that if she is to leave before she'll take me with her. If it's a matter of a few days to the end of the course I'll wait, otherwise I'll be satisfied with a certificate, but I'm leaving. Our exams will be at the end of June; the frontiers are closed so I went back to my

books feeling somewhat calm and I was able to catch up since in these past few weeks I had been neglecting everything. Our lessons have picked up interest for me once again: we dissected a guinea pig (what a shame, it was so cute) fainting spells and escapes from some of us, but I pulled myself together and stayed till the end, but then I got a very bad headache from the ether and formaldehyde. Everybody is panicking for the finals. I'm not too concerned, my main objective is my reunion with Gastone, I keep dreaming of that moment in a variety of themes!! I don't think these finals will be too difficult and our teachers are favorably disposed towards us.
Yesterday, strike! We were so hungry, we made a hell of a noise. We marched into the kitchen, we took some potatoes and we cooked them and when the bell rang amidst laughter and songs we ate them up. Today, strike again, we refuse to wash dishes we have to study for our finals. Only four more weeks before I see Gastone, they seem like an eternity. We'll see how it all will end, tomorrow probably they won't feed us. Today I'm going out of my mind, I'm re-reading your letter, the second since I've been in Switzerland; the thought that you're already a grown man, the changes that have taken place in you, our imminent wedding, our reunion, all of this upsets me tremendously. I'm nervous again, Sandra told me that the frontiers will open on June 1st. How can I stand it? I'll ask the professor if I can take the exams right away so I can leave. Gastone, you're stronger than I am, I see that you took your exams and I'm proud of you. I was glad to hear that my small ring is safe. Then there should also be the chain and the ladybug since they were all together. I was really attached to those. Too bad for the linens, there was some new fabric that Mamma had bought for my dowry. But who cares? I can't thank God enough that He kept us all safe and sound.A special grateful thought to Amedeo who led us to safety and helped us out in the most terrible of times.

However, I didn't think that I would recover anything of what was left behind, all that is saved is well gained. All I want now from life is you, my love, even if we have to live in one small room and work together. What else can I ask more out of life? I'm happy and I bless you with all my heart.

May 29, 1945
Today I received news from Amedeo and Gino. Good news and above all I'm happy that Gino was able to talk to you. But I'm sorry that he told you everything himself, I wanted to go with him and he didn't let me. To think that by now I could have been with you instead of being in front of these horrendous books and the dread of exams. I'm going crazy. When I was on leave, I went up to the frontier to look at Italy, the American soldiers were right there a few steps away - to have to come back up here is the pits. Gino tells me that you tried to get back our house for us, you're so good to think of everything. But nothing matters, I only want to start living with you!

Today school was fun. The optics professor took us out to show us how to take photographs and how to develop them. It will be a nice souvenir. We've organized a very ingenious plan against our bosses. Since we didn't wash the dishes, they left them dirty, locking up all the rest of the utensils and we were told "Either you wash the dishes or you don't eat". They expected us to capitulate but we had foreseen this and we each bought a plate for ourselves and after we ate from it we each washed our own. Irritation and anger from Leitung, she was raving mad not knowing what else to do. I want to see how long this will go on, we're having a lot of fun! Hurray, it seems that within the month of June we'll all repatriate. I'm rushing to the American Consulate to get better information. I'm going nuts, I can't think straight, I wouldn't want it to be just a rumor. We're going to ask the teachers to anticipate the exams and then...here I come Gastone! I'm so happy, happy, happy!

June 3, 1945
My morale has gone from sky high to the depth of hell. Goodbye hopes of a swift return, nothing is true regarding the frontiers, in fact it seems that it's going to take longer to process the papers and it's likely to take more than a month. I'm out of my mind, these highs and lows unnerve me terribly and there's no possibility of escape either, the allies would put me in jail. I should have done it right away. I have to resign myself, this is the way it was meant to be. If I think of Gino who walked 100 kilometers from Genova to Spezia, I don't know if I could have done it. All that's left is to wait. I'll finish the course and take the finals. I'm not worried about passing them, I'm well prepared, but it's an effort to study when my mind is somewhere else. My only consolation is reading your letters over and over, Gastone, I already know them by heart, but each time I read them, they fill my heart with joy and happiness and they make me smile with satisfaction. If only the mail could be more regular, it would be so much easier.

The episode with the dishes is over with the punishment of having our salary cut in half, we now make 0.19 cents a day. The proud act of refusing it was great, but now I'm in a bad mood, I can't even afford to buy stamps. I have coupons for chocolate but I don't have any money to buy it. So goodbye hopes of buying all the nice things I wanted to bring to Italy. Let's tighten the belt and proceed, the bosses are getting more and more obnoxious and our rapport getting more and more tense, thank God they're leaving, but we're paying for it these last few days. But I couldn't care less, and every now and then I take pleasure in going all by myself in my little favorite corner in the garden where I let my imagination go wild and I day dream wonderful dreams of the future when I'll be ... Mrs. Orefice!!!

June 18, 1945
My head is like a volcano! I'm taking finals. I've had two and they

went well, tomorrow I have another one and so on until the end. There's no breather, school, study and that's it. Now that I have resigned to finish the course, Mamma writes that maybe we can leave with Silvia on the 26th of June. Naturally, she begs me to stay calm and study in the event that I would have to stay. Silvia is leaving and I gave her a letter for you and I can't hold in my hope that soon I can leave too any day now. Everyone is electricized, they discuss at the dinner table or at night in bed, only problems pertaining exams, but me.. I'm going to explode! I've been disappointed too many times, so I better stay calm.

I received a letter from you written before the last one, written for my birthday, I was very touched! Your gift Gastone is what is more beautiful and more sacred to a girl, and you presented it to me with such simplicity that I cried from happiness. Now I'm really beginning to believe that our day is drawing closer. To see it written down that which has always been the dream of my life gives me a sense of ecstacy every time I think about it. Is it possible that I'm so lucky? Do I deserve it? Can I be for you the mate that you expect me to be? How many things I would like to tell you, how many feelings has your letter aroused in me, but I had to bury them within myself for now. I have no one to confide in, these girls are fine and good but they wouldn't take me seriously, if I were to confide my thoughts to them, they would tease me that I'm the usual overgrown child full of old fashioned sentimentalism. Never, I'll keep my beautiful dream world to myself and also the real one full of hopes and promises. Poor Mamma wrote to me saying that we have 100 dollars in the bank and if I find someone that would make me an invoice, I could buy something for my dowry. How wonderful! I don't think I could get much, but I'd be happy to buy a suit and some personal lingerie, I can't believe that I can actually go out and buy things for a future ... bride. I hope Mr. Silbestein who owns that beautiful store could help me out, I'll go tomorrow after the exams. Hurray, I'm so happy!

June 26, 1945

Today we went out on a boat, with Prof. Acherman, in the middle of the lake to take and analyze the water, we had a lot of fun and it will be a good memory for life.

Brissago, July 7, 1945
I'm back here again at my work camp and I ask myself how I endured it for so many months. Now that I've tried a period of almost normal life busy with various other problems and school, this life of only material work without stopping and with all the confusion, gives me a great sense of discomfort. I feel so estranged to this world that was mine for such a long time and if I didn't have the hope of leaving in the next few days I would be in deep desperation. And the finals are over and with that my life as a student came brilliantly to an end! Now that it is all over and I'm back here I can think objectively: this past period was extremely

pleasant and I will always have a wonderful memory of it for the rest of my life both for the studies and for the social life with young girls from all walks of life. We established a close bond among us having lived in such closeness, it has never happened before with any other friend nor will it ever happen again. We never had parties nor did we do anything extraordinary, but it was wonderful just the same. I'm glad now that I stuck it out even if it cost me a lot of concentration on my part.

Little by little I passed all my exams with good grades and the results corresponded to the efforts that I put in. This put some value on my self esteem, not that it's such a big deal but I was pleased to show myself and the others that I could overcome any difficulty. I'll never forget the events of the fourth of July. After they presented us with the diploma in all the pomp and circumstance, they invited us all to a beautiful hotel for delicious refreshments! At the beginning there was an air of intimidation and tension but then we all warmed up and we started to talk and joke around and it was so nice to come face to face with the professors in an atmosphere of cordial familiarity that I would not have imagined possible after seeing them in the classrooms. Everyone was extremely kind and sincere in their impressions of us and what pleased me the most was to hear that these impressions were really good. They confessed that at the beginning they had their doubts about the success of the program and many times disconcerted about the ethnicity of the student body. But later they were very satisfied with the interest that we were showing. Baer made a nice speech, (mocking us as he usually did) he's such a fantastic person; I would give anything to be able to work with him or with any other of our professors. If we had taken the course before, I would have asked for an internship. Too bad, so the course ended with a very pleasant ceremony, at night, movies and a good dinner with dessert!

I then packed and here I am on leave, I felt very bad leaving my friends, they were almost in tears when we said goodbye but we promised to keep in touch and I really hope to see them in Italy. Many have already received their orders to leave but I'm still waiting with even more impatience than before. I want to see that much longed for envelope from the police which will allow me to leave. It's really a matter of a few days now, but it doesn't seem true, I won't believe it until I'm on that train with my ticket to Como; I'm afraid something will happen to prevent my dream from coming true. Please, I want to leave, I can't take it anymore, it's been almost two years my dear Gastone, and I'm at my wits end!

From Neuchatel I saw a convoy of Italian soldiers leave, I wanted to get on that train with them, and as the train left I felt a cold chill down my body. But I feel that my moment will come soon and I will have the great exhilaration of crossing the border, the same border which I crossed two years ago with an altogether different emotion. Yesterday I accompanied Silvia, she should be in Italy by

now, she was so nervous getting everything ready that she wasn't thinking of the great joy that was waiting for her after so much misery, she deserves it! I just made it in time to say goodbye, I wanted to tell her so many things for her to tell you Gastone, but she was so excited she wasn't paying any attention to me. I was sorry that she threw out a letter that I had written to you some time ago and I had given it to her thinking it would leave before. I wrote it one night when I was feeling that particular sense of sweet melancholy that binds us together. I had filled pages with that fantastic emotion that had come to me then, but never reread them. She shouldn't have torn it, she should at least have given it back. Too bad, soon I'll be near you and I'll express everything I feel in person. Everything that I kept bottled up in my heart all these months, but I don't know if I can.

I returned here so full of enthusiasm both because of the great results I had and for the joy of being close to my family and to Italy knowing that it won't be long. But I found Mamma and the others quite nervous at the uncertainty of our future. Besides they don't want to give us the dollars that Mario sent us, they want to keep them to cover the expenses that we cost them. So that all the things that we wanted to buy go up in smoke. I had some things put way in Neuchatel, for my trusseau, but I guess I'll have to do without. Gastone, I think I know you well by now to know that we'll be happy regardless of how much we have. We both carry an enormous value that nobody can take away and with this we'll have all our happiness. Luckily between us there was never any discussion about money, nor do I think there will be in the future, since neither one of us has anything. We'll both work, and we'll just have a couple of rooms as our kingdom, don't you think that's enough? I was able to buy a nice suit with the help of Mamma and Mr. Silberman insisted on giving me a beautiful white blouse, I hope you don't mind. I bought a silk tie for you, I hope you'll like it. Tonight I'm a little down, a bit tired, I need the good news soon to lift my morale . Whatever the future holds for us, I'll accept it as long as we're together!

July 21, 1945
I'm still here in Brissago and we still haven't had our orders, it's crazy! I'm furious, why must we be the last ones! And with this heat in the ironing chamber all day I melt, and with no salary to boot, right now I've become ... a guest! The hell with them, I'm going to do what I feel like and they can't say anything.

What a great excitement yesterday! Amedeo and Anna were at the Italian border and also yesterday, I rushed down that hot sunny road with a pallid illusion that you could also have gone there, but that wasn't the case, but your letter dated June 26 made up for the disappointment. Things will be different from what I had expected; my family plans to settle in Florence at the beginning but I don't intend to be still separated from you. I know that you wrote that we'll get married soon but I still want to go to Livorno

and I won't hear anything to the contrary. Therefore, I'll stay in Florence for the first few days to see that my family settles down and then I'm off to be with you. I'll be happy to see your family, I'm looking forward to giving your mother a big hug, but the idea of seeing your father worries me - he intimidates me. We'll see when I get there. I'm so glad I insisted on calling the consul in Bern. They had simply forgotten about us, there's no record of us on any list of departures. It's crazy, we could have left ages ago. Yesterday the meeting halfway on the bridge was very funny. Today I wanted to go back, but it was too tiring for Mamma to walk so I got the idea to get a rowboat and get there by water. So we had a nice outing on the lake and I went swimming in...Italy! There were some Americans who took some pictures of us. The 18th was a sad day for me; I had hoped to spend your birthday together. Instead I had to work all day and I had such a terrible lump in my throat! Poor Mamma wanted to celebrate your day anyway and she bought some pastries and cigarettes that I'll bring you. I wanted to buy you more, but my friends are no longer existent. Then with Emma we had an ice cream which was my meager consolation. Thanks for saving me the chocolate that Lina sent you. I also saved you some of the one they give us every month. You're really good to take your exams in this heat, I know what it's like. Your work must be very interesting and I hope I can be of some help to you.

My best wishes my love from the bottom of my heart. Just a few more days, they assured me at the latest next week we'll leave. It's about time!! I have to go to work now, since I've been back they've changed my job every day. I've done everything by now. Bye now, see you soon - for real this time.

July 26, 1945
Hurray, Hurray, we're leaving!!!! On July 31st we'll cross the border. It surely took long enough to find out. As of today still nothing, I was on the edge of a breakdown. I felt wired from all my nerves. I kept to myself not saying anything and if someone asked me something I turned very rude. I begged Anna to go herself to the consul and finally she found out the date of departure. As long as we get away from this place I don't care if we're the very last ones to leave. Just think, Gastone, a week from today I'll be with you. It's too good to be true! But I've really suffered through it, by golly! See you soon, nothing can keep us apart now, the happiness that awaits us is much too great.

July 27, 1945
The orders have arrived. It's confirmed - we're leaving Monday, the 30th, for Chiasso and on the 31st the great step towards ..... happiness!!!!

Florence, August 5, 1945
I'm in Florence! After a very disastrous trip we reached our destination on August 3! Even if the date is significant, I wonder if Gastone remembered. I still haven't seen him, he's in Livorno

and he could get here any time now. I still can't believe that I'm in Italy and moreover to have reached the end of this horrible separation from Gastone. And I'm still yearning for this reunion, I'm so impatient, at this point I'm counting the hours, it's exasperating. We even had to suffer all through our trip; we reached Chiasso on the evening of the 30th, we wait until morning to cross the border. Once again we spend the night on straw sacs. I wouldn't have been able to sleep anyway, even if we had the softest of mattresses. The following morning a convoy was formed, everything seemed so well organized; the Swiss help us young ones board the open truck and load our luggage, great goodbyes and we cross the border!! It was an extremely emotional moment. I felt a great jolt to my heart and big tears started to come down, was it the joy? Regret? I think at that moment I felt an immense sense of gratitude toward the country that I was leaving. After all, even if I suffered for different reasons, I was treated well and I owe it the safety of all of us and this I must never forget. I also experienced a strange feeling of bewilderment as to what was ahead of me. The unknown is always faltering. But as soon as I overcame these feelings, a great joy prevailed over me. I was thinking of my Gastone, to the life I'll have with him.

My dear Italy, with what eyes I am seeing you! Everyone is waving at us and seems to welcome us with glee. We arrived in Como and we encamp in the barracks. Immediately we can tell from the buzzing and confusion, of the lack of discipline and organization that was missing here, and that was so typical in Switzerland. We arrived with the service men, many coming from Germany, and maybe because we were among the last ones to come back, we were treated very brashly, military style. At this point, nothing discourages me, it was already a giant step we had taken towards Florence, towards Gastone. We spent the night there, on metal cots without anything on them, no mattress, no straw. I was so tired that I slept anyway.

I was with Mamma, Emma, Franca with the two children, Anna and 20 pieces of luggage consisting of cartons, chests, etc... plus bags and bundles which we were carrying by hand. Amedeo came to help us and between him and me and Anna we loaded and unloaded all by ourselves. We were dead tired, especially Franca, since she had the children, she brought more things with her including a baby carriage tied up with string. I didn't mind doing all that as long as we'd get there, every stop was getting us close to our destination. We succeeded in getting on a military troop train as far as Milano. Another barrack, another night on the cots. We ate at a public cafeteria and I was shocked at the food, it was so good! White bread and rice. I wasn't used to that anymore!

The next morning, we squeezed into an open truck with all our luggage, a horrifying trip to Bologna. Poor Mamma, she was sitting on a chest and I was taking turns standing up. Every now and then, the truck would break down and we'd stop under the boiling sun, nevertheless I never despaired. At one point, we got a flat tire

and they didn't have a spare! We stopped on a road near Piacenza and waited for another truck that had left before ours, to come back to pick us up; we waited from 2 to 8 o'clock at night. We couldn't take it anymore, finally the truck arrived and more loading and unloading and we leave. It had also turned very cold and at 2 AM we arrived in Bologna. We get off and we see an encampment full of tents; nobody tells us where to go, it's pitch black and I finally ask a soldier for directions, he points out the women's section, everywhere is packed. A very indisposed nurse gives us blankets at least for Mamma and the children, after I asked her. We go into a tent where we can't see a thing; we lie down on the bare dirt floor, it was so damp and cold, it's a good thing I had my fur. Nevertheless I'm shivering from the cold but I fall asleep from sheer exhaustion. Amedeo stayed outside to keep an eye on the luggage.

That morning, at the first light of the day, we notice that there was a man with us, who very kindly greeted us. We ask about means of transportation for Florence, but we're told that there are people who have been waiting for over a week and they have precedence over us. This is really too much! How can we spend another night in Bologna under those conditions? I'm really desperate, I try to find out more information and I learned that there are troop military trains that go by once in a while, if I were alone I'd try it, but how can I abandon the others? I ' m really torn, finally Amedeo, who had come to meet us in Como, found a truck to rent. Hurray, we get on it and away we go towards Florence! I had sworn to myself that I had to get there by the 3rd and so I did! During the trip, I kept thinking how our meeting was going to be and how I would have wanted it! We're speeding through the road with beautiful country sides parading before our eyes, every mile is a mile less that separates us. Oh my dear Gastone, what ruins, oh my dear poor country you're in such bad shape! I expected some devastation, but it was worse than I imagined!

Finally at 9 PM we arrive in Florence! A scream of joy escapes my lips as we arrive in Via Dello Studio and unload the truck. I run to the telephone to call your parents but they're not home. I hope you received the telegram I sent you from Milan. Yesterday morning when I called "Stampa", as you suggested, I was told that you had already been informed of the arrival of your fiance. I had called the landlords. And so I wait, but I didn't hear from you all day yesterday, the hours go by and I'm beginning to impatiently wonder if you'll get here today. What a horrible wait this is, if I knew if you were coming or not I'd be more relaxed, I would have run to Livorno if I had known, but I was afraid that if I went there you would be here. I'm so depressed, I wanted you to be here so badly when I arrived, even if I was a mess when I got here, dirty and tired. Now at least I have bathed and have washed my few pieces of clothing, and I feel rested and refreshed and ... ready to see you, you're the only thing missing now. Yesterday morning Augusto came by and was very surprised to find me in his house, he was very

cordial and kind, I went to his office where Manilino works with him. He spoke so well of you, of the exams you took and how you both study together. Bravo! I had no doubt at all!

Now we're faced with further problems, we thought we'd stay either here or in Livorno but now it seems impossible. The situation is more critical than we had expected, but I'm not losing heart, I'm sure we'll find a solution. I'm young and I can work. What's pressing now is to have Mamma settled and to get a good job for ourselves. We have so many things to talk about, but we'll have plenty of time to do so. I saw Luciana Boldetti to whom I'm forever grateful for all that she and her family did for us during that terrible period, hidden in the convent. She told me what your father said knowing that we succeeded in escaping to Switzerland, I felt so bad! How could he think of such a thing? We escaped this city not knowing what was going to happen just getting as far as Milano. Amedeo was able to plan our flight to Switzerland only then not having any other choice. I know what I went through, I didn't want to leave without you, Gastone, but I don't want to talk about it nor think about it; I just was very hurt by his insinuations, I have a big lump in my throat, it's just not fair, that's all! That's it now, I want to chase away any sad thoughts, I don't want to spoil the great joy that is waiting for us from the first moment that I'll see you again and then my dear nothing and no one on this world can separate us and I'll never leave you again! (Unless you have some different thoughts about it)

Epilogue

Florence, August 7, 1945
This morning the dream that had been my constant daily thought for 20 months was finally realized!! I was in Gastone's arms once again, and the reunion was so magnificent that even in my imagination it could not have been better. I wonder why I thought I would have found him changed physically and otherwise, and what an enormous joy to find him exactly the same way as when I had left him, more mature, stronger in character, but it's still him. His parents wanted me to spend the night with them and be there for you. They came back only last night and your father took me to the press room where we were able to call the newspaper in Livorno: I could only talk to you for 2 minutes and while I was waiting all choked up, I didn't even recognize your voice. You just told me that you'd get here the next morning. There are no means of transportation but he got a ride with the newspaper's jeep and at 8 o'clock he was home. When I found myself in his arms my emotion was such that I couldn't even talk, I had no voice to express the multitude of feelings that were boiling over in my heart. After the first overwhelming moment, we just looked ourselves over for a long time without speaking and it seems we were both satisfied with the mutual examination. He gave me so many things that showed me his constant thought, his affection, his refined sentiments. The new Ladybug is what I appreciated the most, our good luck charm and symbol. Then he opened a huge box of American chocolates and we started to eat them, but I couldn't even swallow, me the glutton, I was too confused and too happy to realize what was happening around me outside of having him near me; I wanted to make sure that I wasn't dreaming, that he was there. My dread was that perhaps I was dreaming and I didn't want to get up.His parents welcomed me with much effusion and I'm on cloud number 9, seventh heaven!
We then went to Mamma and Emma who were anxiously waiting, and then hand in hand around the city. I wanted to talk and talk, to fill the gap and at the same time listen to his adventures and I realized that we were both listening to half the things we were saying, I was just wallowing in his nearness and in the sound of his voice.

Now I'm here at home, I can't wait to see him again tomorrow morning to make sure that he won't get away from me again, I'm afraid something is going to happen to keep us apart again. I can't sleep tonight, I'm too excited, I feel like I have an indigestion of happiness. It doesn't seem possible to hear him talk of how we're going to plan our lives, however I'll be happy with him next to me no matter what, life will be magnificent!

Will I be able to meet his expectations? Even if I'm the same as before, I feel I've made some changes due to the great amount of experiences that have matured me, but I hope these changes won't

bother him. I feel I'll be happy, neither one of us is perfect but we can be tolerant of one another and overcome any little diversity.

And now I close my long outpour, it has been of great comfort to me during my exile, now I'll have someone who will guide and advise me through life. A life which I envision full of beautiful hopes!

THE END